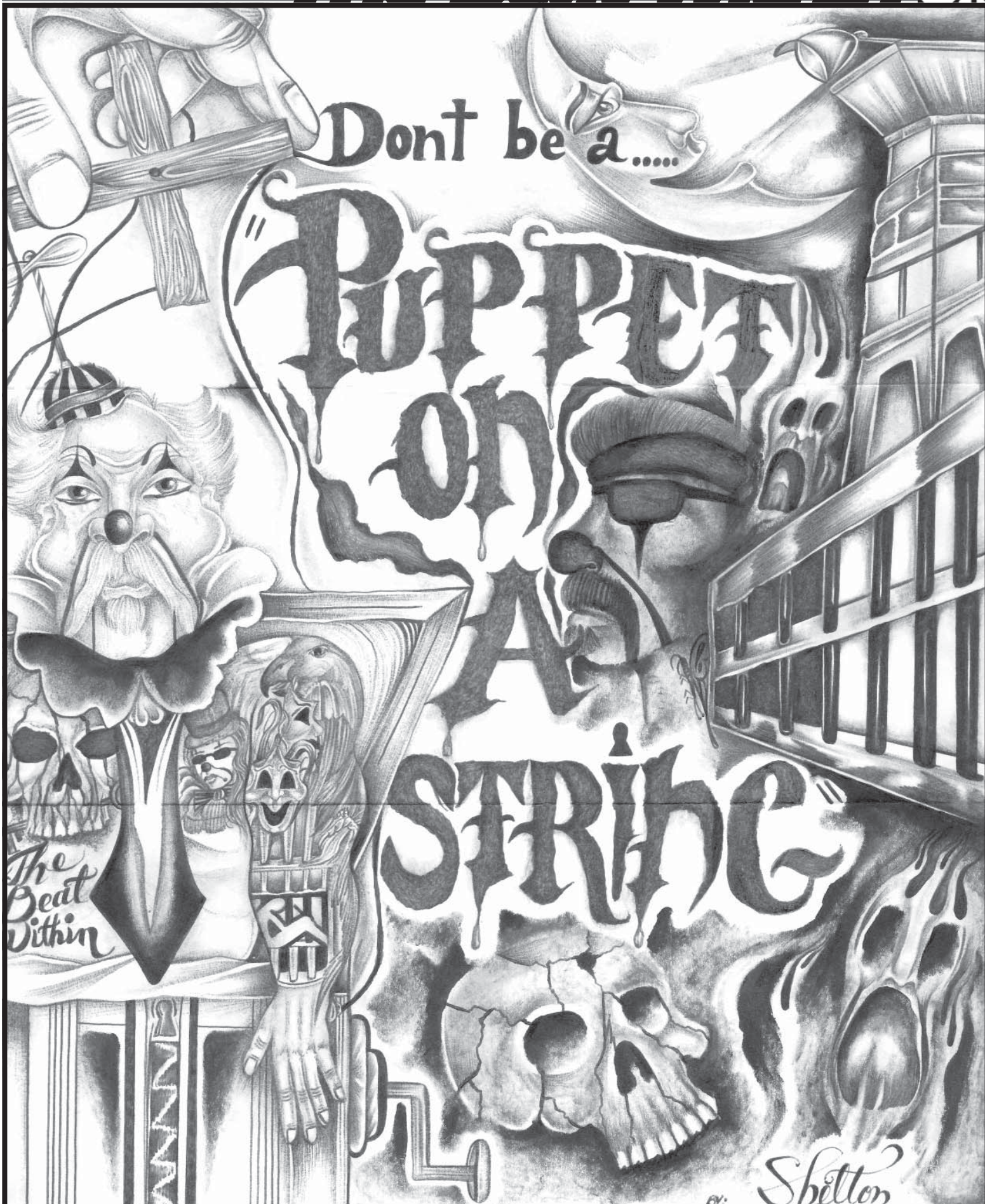




This has been an interesting week for The Beat. Two times we have had an opportunity to inform some "important people" both about the very existence of The Beat Within, and to suggest that it is a resource they should not ignore. This is how it came about.

Our first chance came when The Beat was invited to a "Public Forum" that was hosted by Katie Curic who, in September, will become the first woman sole anchor in America of a network news show, the CBS Nightly News. (She will be taking the place of Dan Rather who left CBS last month.) Curic and her executive producer have been traveling around the country meeting with "ordinary people" like us to get ideas about how the nightly news can be more relevant to our lives, and asking their audiences what stories or issues are important to them. There were several hundred people at the San Francisco gathering, so there was no guarantee we would be recognized to speak our mind. But we were very aggressive, and did manage to be recognized. Because CBS had been asking about stories that could explain national questions, but still have a local appeal, we spoke about how this unique publication answers that need. Every week we fill our pages with local stories, and yet these local stories are being lived in every city in this country, so The Beat is a reflection of an ongoing national disaster. We spoke specifically about how the media, like CBS, allows the government to define our terms of discussion without ever challenging those terms. We used the example of "Leave No Child Behind" — and you can read what we said in the letter we sent to CBS News as a follow-up to that public meeting.

Here is our letter:

"Dear CBS Nightly News:

"We want to thank you for the invitation to participate in the town hall meeting in San Francisco yesterday where we were able to make a point about the publication called The Beat Within (www.thebeatwithin.org). We were only able to very quickly summarize some of the reasons why we think many different news stories, both domestic, national and even international, can be told through this publication — which, we believe, is unique in the country.

"We spoke at the forum about how the media allows the Administration (of whatever party) to define the parameters of policy and programs through the use of unexamined language, and we used 'Leave No Child Behind' as an example. The media seems to accept the terms of that phrase as provided by the Bush Administration to judge its successes and failures (i.e., how much test scores have or have not improved). But the phrase suggests that we, as a society, are in fact leaving no child behind when, of course, that is far from the truth. The Beat Within reveals the social decay at the heart of our cities: 11-year-old children left to care for their 8 and 4-year-old siblings while Mom is out all night either scoring drugs or selling herself, or both; Dad is either nowhere to be found, or he is abusive, or he is someone to visit in prison; guns are a constant in their lives, and easier to get than a decent education (schools are being closed, jails opened); etc. Our national treasure is sucked up in the sands of Iraq, while these already impoverished neighborhoods lose even more services... and the beat goes on!

"Those who write in The Beat Within are another version of the folks we saw in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, desperately asking their own government to save them, and their stories are the weekly meat and potatoes of The Beat. (We have no doubt that if the epidemic of violence that is happening in this population were occurring among white, middle class children, the country would be mobilizing a national effort to find the causes and promote the cures.) That's just one straightforward approach that The Beat provides — a real window into the lives of young people who almost never get to speak for themselves.

"Another great story idea that comes through The Beat is the positive stories that so many of your viewers crave. Even as we write this letter, we are surrounded by young people who have been ground up in the criminal juvenile justice system, but who have come out the other end with a new view of the world and of themselves in it — despite the absence of educational, vocational, psychological, or any other beneficial services, meaning the change has come almost entirely through their own efforts and internal strengths — and are making huge differences in the lives of so many young people who need this kind of mentor to relate to and to see the possibility of change in their lives. One remarkable young man spent all his youth, from age 14-24, locked up in the justly infamous California Youth Authority, and now works with us, giving back to other troubled young people every single day. We could put you in touch with many, many young people who have experienced this system first-hand and are thoughtful and articulate about what is wrong with the system and what might be done to fix it.

"There are even very interesting things revealed by our young writers (all incarcerated while they write) which lead us to see strong similarities between their lives and view of the world, and the news coming out of the Middle East! In both places, turf war is endless and deadly; in both, everyone is armed; in both, there is a sense (citing now the Palestinians) of no future, no hope, no connection to a meaningful life; this leads to ongoing war in the Middle East and ongoing slow-motion civil war (on a mini scale) in our cities. If you read The Beat and then read the paper, you will be astounded, as we are, by the similarities in language and commitment to a cause (a gang, for example) that is more valuable than individual life — and the hopeless view that this will never change.

"Altogether, we want to suggest that this magazine is a unique resource, both locally and nationally, that is hardly tapped for the wealth of information and feeling that it provides of a population that hardly gets any attention at all, except in brief nightly descriptions of crime, and is almost never credited with having a voice worth listening to."

The very next day after sending this letter, the newspaper reported that California State Senate President Pro Tem, Don Perata of Oakland, fed up with the level of violence among young people in the Bay Area, is convening a group of "important people" to come up with solutions. Naturally, those invited to "solve" the problem are the very people now in charge of the same thing (cops, POs, DAs, etc.), and we know how well they've done so far... In other words, one of the most powerful politicians in California is putting a task force together of "the usual suspects" to "really do something!" The article prompted us to write another letter, this one to the Senator, hoping that we could expand his thinking (and by so doing, also expand the thinking of everyone who attends this conference

he's planning).

Here is our letter to Senator Perata (with apologies for any similarities to the CBS letter):

"Dear Senator Perata:

"We read with great interest your intention of convening a group to address the epidemic levels of teen violence in the Bay Area in a meaningful and effective way. We want to "invite" a participant to your table that doesn't need to be there in body, but should be known to all who attend, and that is the voice of the kids themselves, perpetrators and victims alike.

"We work with The Beat Within (www.thebeatwithin.org). For the past ten years, we have gone into juvenile halls in the Bay Area, including both San Francisco and Alameda Counties, every single week, and every single week we have published what these young people write in our weekly magazine (50-100 pages every week). From these weekly outpourings, you (and your invited guests) can get a window into a world which is too often described only in terms of the terrible crimes we read about, and then, only with the kind of journalistic 'what, where, why, when,' that provides no social context or any kind of reflection of what the world looks like through these young people's eyes.

"Without justifying any of their behavior, The Beat does provide a much greater understanding of these broken lives, and perhaps points in some remedial directions. Although we do have some editorial limits (we don't allow our writers to boast about their sets or turf or colors, nor do we allow any kind of threats), we do not shy away from controversial subjects. (We bring to our workshops each week three suggested topics to choose from, though we don't restrict our writers from writing about other things on their minds as well). We have had topics on murder, drugs, crime reduction, juvenile justice policies, what's missing in their neighborhoods, gangs, what they would do if they were in charge, why guns are so ubiquitous, and what about their family lives lead to the social breakdown that you'll be addressing at your meeting. And while much of the writing is mundane, there are also wonderfully deep, thoughtful and even mind-blowing pieces in every issue — and every issue sheds light on a world most of us would rather not look at. There is, as to be expected, a huge amount of pain expressed by these young men and women, most of whom have lost friends and family to gun violence.

"We believe this is a treasure of human resources that goes almost untapped by people in your position who have some power to make a change. It is because of that that we are sending you this letter, and asking that The Beat Within be a part of your convening by way of alerting your participants to its existence and to our web page, which is updated each week and contains some of the best pieces we get, and, if you'd like, by providing you hard copies of one or more issues of The Beat (which we could easily provide) for all who attend.

"We hope this doesn't come across as presumptuous. We have no more answers than you about reducing this growing plague, but we do have a unique and incredible resource that we believe would add an element of reality to your meeting. We hope to hear from you soon about getting some Beats into your hands, and would be happy to talk to you or anyone in your office about our program and this suggested use for The Beat Within."

To date, neither CBS News nor Senator Perata has responded...

Moving on to this week's topics, they are, "What Made You Give Up?" — Was there ever a time (maybe now) when everything seemed to be going wrong, to be falling apart all around you, where the things that keep you strong fell away, pushing you to want to give up? If you go from riches (money in your pocket) to rags (change in your pocket), does that make you want to give up? If you lose a close homie or family member to violence, do you want to give up? Do you feel like that when you are taken away from home and put in the box? Tell us about a time when you were pushed so far to the limit that you wanted to give up, and what you did to overcome this feeling.

Our second topic, "How Has Society Failed You?" We've all heard the phrase "menace to society." What The Beat wants to know this week is, how has society contributed to you or those you know becoming a "menace to society"? How has society failed you as you look back on your life? By "society," we include your family, your church, your school, the police, the court system, the hall, The Beat — everyone that has an impact on your life. Did bad schools fail you? Was it the police and harsh laws? Was it the business community that has no jobs for you, or the easy access to alcohol and drugs, and the fact that commercials tell you how cool it is to drink? Whatever your take may be, let The Beat know how society has failed you on a personal level, and what you (and we) can do to correct this failure.

Our third topic, "Don't Wake Me Up 'Cause I'm Dreaming!" - Do you ever recall when you were having such a lovely dream that you wished you never woke up from it? What was the dream about? Who was in your dream? Have you had this dream more than once? Was it slow real that you wondered if it really happened or not? Do you hope to dream this again — or do you hope this dream comes true? Tell The Beat about the best dream you ever had, a dream that you wished you never woke up from. As always, keep it Beat appropriate, 'cause if you don't, you'll be wasting your time and ours since it won't get published!

And our last topic, "When I Was Little..."

Knowing this, lets praise this week's POWs (Pieces Of the Week)! Props to... Kelly, Young Keece, Sarillo, Sharky, Mama's Boy, Lil' Sam, and Jacob all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC: Cash, Goofy, two from Reese, Nestor, Zoltan, and April. From Marin: Dean and Dominic. From Arizona: Javier and Samantha. From Walden House PSK: Kalifornia and Orgunizum.

This issue goes out to you powerful BWO (Beat With Out) writers. My oh my, we have said this many times over the years, but you writers really do become the backbone, the soul, the teachers in this one of a kind publication. Every week you knock us off our feet with your in yo' face tales, your knowledge, your concern, your love and full on support towards The Beat Within. Thank you BWO writers, we feel your love and it's priceless. Keep spreading the word of this powerful history book/work of art.

See you sooner than later! Read and write on!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs—California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. S.F.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: We love the 150 Crew, and we love that you 150-counselors show The Beat love too! This next piece comes from **Rossell**, a Group Counselor from the 150 Crew. This is Rossell's first contribution. We hope that each and every one of you out there take time to read this piece, and hang it on your wall. Read it everyday. Raise yourselves up - raise the bar! We look forward to hearing more from you, Rossell. Powerful words!

Raise The Bar

I would like to get a message out to the youth who are incarcerated and to those who are free.

My greatest concern for the youth that are growing up in urban communities is that there seems to be a lack of drive and determination. Meaning, eventually today's juvenile inmates will sadly be tomorrow's prison population if they do not raise the bar!!! What does raise the bar mean? We hear this phrase so often that it has become diluted and meaningless unless we are watching a Cingular commercial. Raising the bar means that you take deliberate action to challenge yourself so that you eventually become a better person. Raising the bar means you do not look for major rewards for small achievements. So many times I see such great potential in the youth that is saddens me to see a person achieve practically nothing because they simply do not push themselves to be better.

As a youth growing up in this day and age you should ask yourself one question. Am I a better today than I was yesterday? This statement is the essential ingredient to success. If our youth would strive to be better each day then the last then we would see our youth making better decisions. Better decisions translate to the possibility of our youth committing less crime that land them in juvenile hall. Raising the bar requires our youth to have real goals in life such as learning to read at grade level so that they have a fighting chance to attend college in the future.

So often I witness our youth holding onto the material goals that they see in videos and television shows that it creates a culture of hopelessness. Meaning, our youth do not believe that they can attend college or get a trade to obtain these material items so they in turn steal and rob someone who has worked so hard to obtain such possessions.

To this mentality I say raise the bar so that you do not have to steal and rob. I challenge every youth that reads this article to raise the bar and truly make yourself a better person each day. Stop underachieving and began to reach your full potential. Raising the bar requires that our youth make a conscious effort to want to live a better life. I believe in you all and I just hope that this article touches someone out there and will inspire them to live life to its fullest.

-Rossell, Group Counselor, 150 Crew

What Made You Give Up?

I am a heroin addict. I have been using for a few years. When I started using heroin life was one big game to me.

Me and my "friends" thought life was great. We would shoot up a couple times a month. It was a great high. After my first time I did it, I was like, "Wow! When can we do it again?"

After awhile I started doing it a couple times a week. During this time I was thinking, I ain't addicted, I can stop any time.

My clean friends started to drift away from me. They was always talking about, "you need to get clean!" And, "Heroin is for the dead, you should go to Narcotics Anonymous."

One of my Heroin friends died on me, Sara (not real name) overdosed.

I personally think that she went on a mission, a mission is where a person do so much heroin that they die. It is suppose to make the suicide easier. Some say that it makes the person happy in death. It is also suppose to be painless. I hope she is in a better place. May she rest in peace.

After about 10-11 months I started doing it daily. After a couple of months I got arrested. I spent four months clean. I hated it. I then went to California Youth Authority (CYA) for three months. At CYA I did lots of heroin. I was doing it five to six times a week or more. I never got caught.

After CYA I was sent back to the Hall. I spent six weeks clean. I then got sentenced to a group-home in Sacramento. The three weeks I was there (at the group home) I did heroin everyday. I was kicked out. I then came back to the Hall and spent several months in the Hall waiting for a group home. I then went to one in Yucaipa, California - It sucked. I spent two months down there. I did heroin everyday.

About a week and a half before I got kicked out I was 5150. I was sent to a psycho-hospital for a suicide attempt and detox. At the hospital I found that I liked being clean and sober. During my stay, someone from NA came and I listened and I learned a lot of things.

After the meeting was over I pulled the guy aside and talked to him about being clean and sober - to get clean and sober for my sake, not for anybody else.

After the hospital I came back to the Hall. I am currently waiting for the courts to decide my future. When I get out of the Hall I am going to start going to NA. I want to get my life together. I want to succeed in life. I don't want to be another statistic. I don't want to be that drug addict living on the streets. I don't want to be begging and robbing people for cash so I can get that fix, that ain't me.

I may have messed up in life, but now I have dreams. My dreams are to help people with drug and alcohol problems, to help teens. I want to get a Masters in Teen Psychology. I'm going to make something of myself.

-Kelly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow Kelly, you've got some great goals! What kind of things did you learn from NA and this encounter with the NA people at the hospital? If you got a straight release today, do you think that you would be able to stay sober? You been placed in CYA and group-homes - and in both places you had access to drugs. What kind of advice would you give the State about handling drug addicts? Kelly, you've been through a lot. The best way to get help is to show others that you want to change. Listen to people, there is help out there. Try to learn about yourself. What are your weaknesses? What are your strengths? Why do you choose what you choose? Where is your life going? Where do you want it to go? Make a commitment to yourself, to better yourself. Start today! Good luck with your new life - and thanks for sharing your on-topic story.

I want to get my life together. I want to succeed in life. I don't want to be another statistic. I don't want to be that drug addict living on the streets. I don't want to be begging and robbing people for cash so I can get that fix, that ain't me.

Trapped In Modern Day Slavery

Ain't no love in these streets for young black men.

They go hard on us. It's modern day slavery!

Man, why do us so bad? Why they treat us so wrong?

These are some of the questions we need to ask, or stay suppressed with no hope.

You know they don't give us jobs for a reason. They put the poison in our 'hood to keep us from seeing how they play us every step of the way, snatch our futures away.

In they mind, we just a game to be played.

We got blind and sold crack to out mothers.

We even sold to our brothers,

and we wonder why the black community going under.

They took the backbones out of our homes,

left the kids to roam in the streets, so we call it our home.

Brothers busting they domes,

greedy for green, gritty and mean.

And to the world we seem obscene...

Shattered dreams, dope fiends plotting on schemes.

First they put the coke on the boats,

now it's off on our beams.

I hate to see somebody mama selling herself for cream.

So look at yourself, this ain't the African dream.

That's why they stripped us from our culture because we were kings and queens.

They kept us down under their grips, basically under there feet.

Education is key, but we rather smoke weed, come to class high, we ain't destined to succeed.

So that's why they proceed

to build more prisons than schools.

It's like we go to prison to get schooled,

becoming a statistic and that ain't cool.

We white washed wanting Jordans and jewels, but we playing the fool.

Then we wonder why we get ridiculed.

So look at your life and tell me ya shhh cool...

Ya lying, defeating ourselves because we wanting wealth but not living for health

because like I said, there ain't no love in these streets for a young black man.

They go hard on us it's modern day slavery, man!

So why we do ourselves so bad...

Why we treat ourselves so wrong?

It's not them, it's us!

We more in the wrong

because our mind should been strong!

-Cash B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a brutal but eye-opening honesty about this great poem, Cash. Even though you indict society as a whole for its racism and need to keep some people suppressed in order to let others move forward, you reserve your harshest criticism for your own community for not taking control of its own destiny - and for furthering the goals of that oppressive society by doing dirt to each other. Sometimes in doing this work, we get totally depressed and hopeless for the future. Then we read a piece like this, and we are reminded that there are those with the potential to lead their people out of bondage, even bondage of their own creation. When you get out here, would you ever consider working at The Beat. We could definitely use you. Indeed, the world needs you. Thank you for keeping it so unsentimentally real!

La Vida

W'at it do Beat? This is that vato Goofy, just posted up in Max-unit B5 in the city of San Francisco. Bueno les voy a escribit de mi vida loca en la pandillas. (Okay, today I'm going to write about my crazy gang life.)

My street life started in 1995 when my two uncles came from El Salvador. I was six years old. My youngest uncle Snoopy was 15, and my other uncle Mickey was 17. That's when I was first introduced to the 'hood. I remember my uncles used to pick me up from elementary school, and on the way home we would chill on the block, and I would watch the homies smoke, drink, get money. And when the chavalas rolled through, we would throw bottles at them and sometimes a couple homies would shoot at them. And back then the SFPD and the narcs hardly ever came through unless they had a mission.

At first my uncles didn't want me to smoke or drink, but either way the homies used to pass it to me. So when my uncles found out they were just like, oh well.

Well, time kept passing and I fell in love with the 'hood. I used to always be on the block. And I remember when a few times I used to go with the homies and look for rivals, I was like 8 or 9, and I never found a rival my same age to fight, so I would fight teenagers or grown men and I would get beat up. But I never backed down and I felt that with each ass whooping I was getting stronger. Well, after a few beatings my Uncle Snoopy bought me a miniature Giants bat and told me to always carry it with me because I always wore my colors, and just in case I ever got caught slippin', I could defend myself. He also told me he got it for me 'cause he said he was tired of watching me come home with a busted lip.

So I always carried my Giants bat and 'till this day I still have my bat in my room at my house. Well, later that year in 1998, my Uncle Snoopy got locked up for pulling a 187 on a chavala. He was here in B5 for a year and got tried as an adult and got three years in Soledad state prison 'cause they never found the gun, they only had witnesses and snitches. Well, he turned three years into six years 'cause since Soledad is a level four prison, everyone is on the main line and the gangs are not separate. So my uncle was always getting into shhhh, and caught more time.

Well during those years, I went with my mom and grandma to visit him every two weeks and he gave me my education of a felon, how the game is played on the streets and how it is played on the inside. And for some reason, I never forgot those "classes" he taught me.

My Uncle Snoopy was released in 2004 and was deported back to El Salvador. He committed a worse crime over there and is now doing 15 to life. Over there the gangs control the prisons, so my uncle has his own cell phone and I call him a couple times a week so we can chop it up. Well, as years went by I continued gang banging and I got jumped into the 'hood. I got my nickname Goofy 'cause I'm always making the homies laugh and always having a good time with them.

Bueno. In 2004 I got locked up for the first time in Alameda County for possession of a deadly weapon. I did one

month and got out. Then a few months after that I caught a gun charge in Contra Costa County and did seven months. I was released on parole and while on parole I was driving a stolen Lexus and got my ass chased all over Richmond. I had all type of cop cars on me and when I got to San Pablo, RPD stopped chasing me and SPPD tried to continue, but I was too quick and got away.

Well, I continued to live the gang life, just posted up on the block all day and night, smoking, drinking, making money on the 'hood, and hunting down rival gang members. Me and the homies would go to clubs like Skylar, El Torro, City Nights, Barcelona and El Rancho de Concord. Every weekend was the same. Go deep to the clubs and let them know quien controla, Que no? (let them know who's in charge)

I've always looked older than my age and with my fake cards I never had a problem getting into clubs. It's always been fun, even when we get to throwing them and dropping some foo's, que no homies?

Bueno, around June last year my girl of two years informed me that she was pregnant, and that's when my mentality changed. Even though I wasn't ready for a child, I knew I had to be ready 'cause I helped make that baby. So I started to cool down in the 'hood 'cause I know I can't officially get out... The only way out is death. So the most I could do was cool down. But don't get it twisted, I'm still down for mines. It just that I got a baby boy Goofy to live for, que no? So I stay even more trucha for those rivals that are out to get me or the homies, 'cause even though most of them are some scary ass chavalas that talk shh as they drive through the 'hood and get their windows busted, there's always a few that have to prove themselves and try to hit a drive-by by shooting in the air.

But you never know, so I stay trucha in the 'hood and out the 'hood 'cause anywhere outside of your 'hood is called slippin'. But I ain't trippin' 'cause that's the way that it goes, que no? Well I now have the prettiest son I could ever ask for, and I love him with all my heart and I would gladly take another bullet to be with him instead of being here.

I've been here for three months and I am fighting the 3/ three strikes law. I wrote that story in the past so you should know it by now. I want to write about it now 'cause I don't wanna remember that incident. Well homies, I hoped you enjoyed this true story of my crazy life. Homies keep your head up, smash this tiempo out the way like the soldiers we are. Don't let it go to your brain 'cause you'll go insane homie. Keep trucha. Se despiden con respeto, (signing off with respect). Al Rato

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is such a well-written piece, Goofy, so full of information and so clearly related that it deserves to be a POW. But that only makes us even more sorry to see you still committed to the 'hood, even if you've slowed down. You say you'd take another bullet to be with your son, but would you give up the gang life to be with him? You have two loves that cannot live easily side-by-side, your son and the 'hood, and it makes us so sad to think of that pretty little boy growing up (like you) without a father! Will his uncles school him the way your uncles schooled you? What seems so tragic to us is that with just a little change of circumstance — if your uncles had been doctors and lawyers and CEOs — you would be a leader today with a foundation rooted in school, a respectable job and the respect of all. Instead, you're a very smart, very well written slave! What a terrible waste — for us because we could use brains like yours, and for you because the world is so much bigger than the little block that defines yours.

I remember my uncles used to pick me up from elementary school, and on the way home we would chill on the block, and I would watch the homies smoke, drink, get money. And when the chavalas rolled through, we would throw bottles at them and sometimes a couple homies would shoot at them.

My Life And Dual Personalities

What's good with the Beat? Dis be ya boy Reese-C-Cup comin' at you from B5 max. But today I'm just gone holla at y'all about my life of a Gemini, know what I'm talking 'bout.

Unfortunately, I was born into the world as a "80's baby" better known as a crack baby. That when the drug hit real hard into the streets. A lot of young mothers got turned out by their boyfriends, husbands or one of their male friends. I'm not ashamed to say my mom is part of that group. My mom has six children by five different daddies. Out of all my bras and sisters, I'm the only one who doesn't have a clue who my father is.

I was born on May 21, '89. I'm borderline Taurus and Gemini. So I always want to be in control, but then again it all depends on the Gemini in me. I'm like night 'n' day. If I'm having one of my night days, I wear my emotion so where people can see them and they push my buttons and I get into trouble. Or I'm in a "I just don't give a damn" attitude all day. But if I'm in one of my good moods, I'm very kind, sweet, talkative, respectful, generous etc. You would never tell I could be a straight up asshole, whatever you wanna call it.

With y'all knowin' that, I would like to tell y'all what it's like growin' up with no parents in the system and being a Gemini. After I was born, I lived in my first house in Bayview. I only stayed there for a while before my mom thought she could take care of me on my own. I was 1 year old then, and about nine months after living with my mom, we ended up homeless. My mom then dropped me off at Mt. Zion, my grandma job, and said she could not take care of me because she was having hallucinations.

Eventually my grandma packed up and moved to a bigger house in the Rich, with the rest of my brothers and sisters. Grams needed money for me, so eventually I had a social worker and I've been in the system every since, age one!

For some reason, at age five my grandma couldn't take care of me and provide for me anymore, so I was moved back to the city which, therefore, I moved to my first foster home. I really cant remember too much about it except the fact that I really didn't know what was going on. They were telling me to call them auntie and uncle and I'm like, "I ain't never see you before, but if you say you're my aunt and uncle, well it must be true because they wouldn't move me with some people that my grandma didn't know or approve of..." At least that's what I thought.

I was living in Lakeview, what part I don't even know, but I was going to Sheridan Elementary and I remember that they had this principal who was hella mean. She was like 5' 7", but to be respectful. I'm not going to guess her weight. But I can tell you she was big boned. She reminds me of a short black Cruella Deville, the lady off that 101 Dalmatians. She was always yelling and her hair looked wild. She just looked flat out mean.

My stay at that foster home was not long. I really didn't know why somebody came to pick me up, help me pack my bags and take me away. They said my foster parents were too old, but later I found out that it was because of my behavior at home and school, and they were getting old. Imagine getting took away from your family and move in with some strangers. It's self-explanatory why I acted out. I was hurt mentally. I still am to this day. A physical pain could never amount to how much pain I feel emotionally

I cried and cried and cried because they were taking me away from my "aunt and uncle," and at that age I didn't know why. My behavior became worse. I started talking back, fighting, cussing, anything to go back home, wherever that was. It just got worst. I lived in over 20 different placements and I'm only 17. I been mistreated, played by some off the other kids, but nothing hurts as much as not knowing my father or living with my mother, just being a number in the system my whole damn life.

When I got old enough to realize what was going on, I became a green-eyed devil. I did not listen to nobody. I would

say, "You ain't mama!" The response I would get was, "You don't even know ya damn mama," or they would say, "I wouldn't want to be ya mama, and if I was I would beat yo' black ass for talking back to me. My own kids don't even do it, and I be damned if I let you do it!"

That would be the icing on the cake for me to start acting straight up ignorant. I would cuss you out, use every word I knew. I knew what I was doing, but I just didn't give a damn no more. I got that attitude around 10, 11 years old.

I could go on and on and on about how my childhood was shhh and everything else. But I'm pretty sure y'all don't care and ain't tryin' to hear all that. So I'm going fast forward time, and talk about right now, how I think me being a Gemini/Taurus distances me away from people, know what I'm talking 'bout.

I have a heard time trustin' people, getting along and other stuff. It be because one day we could be cool, I'm in a good mood, melody aint trippin' off nothin'. But the next day I look, feel and act different. I just be trippin', don't do it on purpose, it's just me, the way I am. That causes people to want to stay way from me. Then again, if you ain't never crossed me or try to put me on blast (embarrass) me, even if I'm in a bad mood, I'm going to try not to get at you foul.

But sometimes shhh just happens, like my relationships with females. It's hard because of the absence of my mom. She made it hard for me to trust females 'cause she walked out on me at a young age. It's like when my female (I'm talking in general 'cause I'm single) with me, I'm hella cool, calm, collected... ain't trippin'. But when she gone and she be like, "I'm gone call you," when I get home and she don't call, I be like, "Damn! She with the next ninja! Ain't even trippin' off me! So now I'm hot. I know when she do call I might go off or tell her I'm asleep 'cause I just don't trust her all like that. She got to earn my trust, know what I'm talkin' 'bout, and that's hard.

There was this one female that I was really feelin'. She has all the right things about her to make ya so-called playas wanna settle down, at least that when you first meet her. She's very smart, not hella ghetto (not that that's a bad thing), but she doesn't know when to be and not. She beautiful, has a top-notch body and sexy smile.

So now you want to know what's wrong with her. Well let me tell you. She think her shhh don't stank. The girl had the nerve to tell me she don't catch the bus, like she too good or something, I'm like, "Damn! My grandma still catch the bus." But it's more. So one day she tell me she needs a ninja with a job (I can respect that), money and a car. But peep game, dough, she ain't got no car, money, or job. The broad's high maintenance. She got champagne taste with beer money.

I ain't gone lie. This is one time for sho I got played. I don't think I'm ever gonna find the one for me. I don't think nobody can handle my split personalities and nowadays women don't like short men. I'm 5' 7", 136 1/2 pounds, hazel eyes, short hair ('bout to get dem waves), full lips, caramel complexion and straight white teeth, plus a Hollywood smile.

I'm still young too, so maybe one day or further down the line that special one would come and capture my heart, soul, spirit, and know how to deal with me and my split personalities. But I'ma holla back at The Beat. I'm further.

-Reese B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a great piece of autobiographical reporting! We are amazed that you've lived through so much at such an early age, and that you still have the upbeat and positive personality that we know in the workshops. (We haven't seen the other side of that Gemini personality...) We wish no child would have to be born into the circumstances that you faced, and that no child would have to be raised serially by 20 different families or placements before the age of 18. It's not fair... but then, of course, life's not fair. When you're out of here, when you're working at whatever job you do get (and you will), and when you are settled down with a wife and family (that, too will come), we think you have the skills to put these experiences into a powerful book that reveals both the devastation that children face, and possibly some possible solutions. It's interesting you have trust issues with females because your mom left you at such an early age. We would think you'd have even greater trust issues with males 'cause your dad deserted you at an even earlier age! You are clearly a survivor, and we recognize the strength you must have inside to have endured all that you have. Which do you think is the biggest influence on the way you are, your astrological signs or the circumstances of your birth and upbringing?

I Was A Blind Man Who Recovered

I was a blind man who never had a plan
 All I bring is shame and disgrace
 That is a lot of pain
 A lot wonder why I changed my life
 Cleansed my soul
 I found a different way to get on with my life
 I am in the dark
 But I am trying to get up on the light
 I never tell myself
 I never rest in paradise
 Step my step
 The energy is coming to me
 That is what I need to be free
 From poverty
 These phony folks
 Want to see me down
 But I am resilient
 Bounce back right on my two feet
 I was alone
 All my friends disappear
 When your boy locked back in jail
 I suffocate
 But I survive
 Anything came my way
 I had to maintain
 Thank God
 I was not new to the game
 Age nine
 My mama left home
 Because my father would abuse her
 Then kick her around
 Age ten
 The street became my best home
 Robbery anywhere
 As soon as my belly cried
 Age eleven
 I am chilling with the Macevelen
 Hanging with Gs and entertainers
 Trying to make some papers
 That goes on and on
 Can't even count the times
 I almost got my life taken
 Kick back
 Trying to make some Gs
 Young brother on the run
 Getting chased by the police
 Grew up in a poor, poor home
 Poverty-wise
 Got to survive
 In the hard way
 Deep down I know
 I will pay
 Some day
 For messing up things
 It did happen
 And I learned a lot

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: Your poetry, your attitude and your patience are amazing. Welcome back to The Beat Dean! We've missed your fabulous raps! Usually you rap about all the poor children in the ghettos—this is the first time you've ever written anything about yourself and your life! You've already paid a lot by being in juvy. You now write that you've learned a lot! From all your personal experiences, what can you teach your readers about life?

I have changed a lot, that even to this
 day, I am impressed with this change.

Volviendose Tonto

Para mí ser tonto, pendejo es algo en que yo no busco en alguna persona. Para mí, ser tonto es algo en lo que no tienes que buscar en una persona porque lo que importa en la gente es que sean sinceras, que te aprecien y esten contigo en las buenas y en las malas.

Afortunadamente nunca me he metido en problemas por eso creo que esto no me pase algún día.

Lo que les diría a la gente es que traten de buscar lo positivo de estas persona porque nadie es perfecto en el mundo. Nosotros no somos nadie para juzgar a otras personas. Lo primero que deben hacer es ver sus propios defectos antes de juzgar. El único que nos puede juzgar es Dios porque él nos hizo como el quiso y nos hizo así por algo.

La persona que me tiene aquí, creía que era una buena persona. Siempre me llebe bien con ella. Nunca espere que fuera capaz de hacer algo como lo que hizo. Nunca creí que alguien en quien yo creía que era buena persona, saliera con esa mentira que me tiene en este lugar.

Lastimosamente estoy en la cárcel por una mentira, aunque no lo crean. Me ha afectado mucho en mi vida pero me ha ayudado a reflexionar y a apreciar lo que más quiero. Cuando estaba afuera no queria ir a la escuela ni ayudar a mi madre. Desde que vine aquí a la cárcel, gracias a esa mentira, yo he cambiado tanto que hasta yo estoy impresionado con este cambio.

From The Beat: ¡Que linda expression, Nestor! Estamos totalmente deacuerdo con lo que dices. Nadie tiene el derecho de juzgar a nadie porque todos cometemos errores, sean errores grandes o pequeña. Deberia de conocer a las personas bien antes de darles toda la confianza. También esperamos que este tiempo te de la sabiduria que necesitas para salir adelante y así poder ayudar a las personas que te necesitan como tu madre.

Going Dumb, Stupid, Hyphy

For me, going dumb, stupid is something which I don't look for in a person. For me, going dumb is something that you shouldn't look for in a person because what really matters about a person is that they're sincere, that they appreciate you, and that they are with your during good and bad times.

Fortunately, I have never gotten myself in problems. That's why I believe this won't happen to me someday.

What I would tell people is to try to look for the positive in these people because no one is perfect in this world. We are nobody to judge other people. The first thing one should do is to look at oneself and see one's own defects before judging others. The only one who can judge us is God because He made us to His liking and He made us like the way we are for a reason.

The person who has me in here, I thought that person was a good person. I was always cool with her. I never thought she would be capable of doing something like what she did. I never believed that someone who I thought was a good person would come up with that lie that has me in this place.

Unfortunately, I am in jail because of a lie, even though they don't believe it. It has affected my life a lot, but it has helped me reflect and appreciate what I love the most. When I was on the outs, I didn't want to go to school, nor help out my mother. Ever since I came to jail, thanks to that life, I have changed a lot, that even to this day, I am impressed with this change.

-Nestor B2, SF/YGC

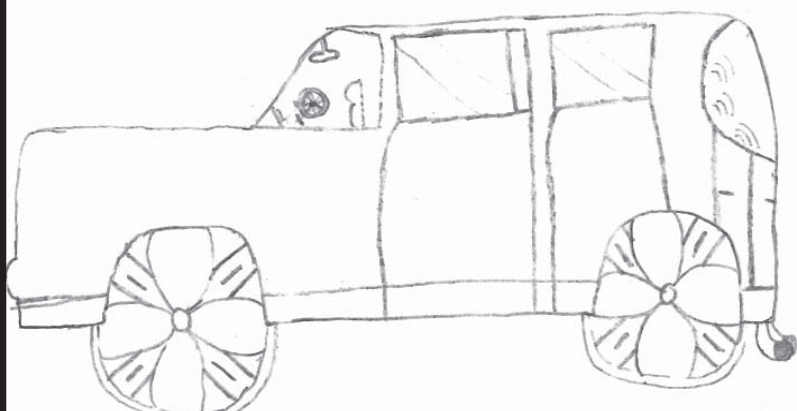
From The Beat: What a wonderful expression, Nestor! We completely agree with what you said in your piece. No one has the right to judge anybody because we all make mistakes, be it big or small mistakes. You should get to know people very well before placing all your trust in them. We also hope that this time gives you the wisdom you need for you to strive forward, and thus be able to help out the people that need you like your mother.

The Music Of Her Moods

I see her bare feet slap across pink linoleum
 Creating a rhythm of internal comfort
 She swishes her hips side-to-side
 Fingernails click together, and she hums
 She is at her best when she's fresh out of the shower
 Humming softly and bending her knees to the beat
 Drying herself off and throwing her towel on the bed
 Examining her body in the mirror
 She jumps up and prances to the computer
 Soon Tupac fills the room and her movements change
 Now, instead of prances, she swaggers
 Grabs one of my hats from the bed and puts it on
 Her skin glistens as she dances
 Hair wet and black, and she moves her hips to the song
 Making a face and then giggling quietly
 The song changes—it's our song and now she's crying
 She takes off my hat and cradles it to her breast
 Tears mix with the moisture on her body and drips
 A wet stain grows on the bill of my hat
 She rocks slowly back and forth
 You can see the memories behind her closed eyes
 She gets up slowly and puts on my sweatshirt
 A fresh stream of sorrow trickles down as she inhales
 In just my sweatshirt she curls up on the bed
 Sobs yanking her shoulders and she gasps noisily
 It's a heart-wrenching scene, and the song changes again
 She rose unsteadily and swung her feet off the bed
 She stayed there for about five minutes, her feet rooted
 The play list ended on a sad note and the silence is deafening
 Trying to pull herself together, she wipes her nose and stands
 She pulls on panties and a black shirt and crosses the room
 She hesitates a second, then plays our song again
 You can see on her face the emotional restraint
 Screwing up her eyes and pursing her lips
 Overcoming the tears, she pulls off my sweatshirt
 Her breasts getting caught on the bottom elastic band
 She looked at herself for another minute
 Moved to pull the sweatshirt back on
 Thought better of it, and pulled on a bra instead
 All of a sudden she broke down
 Wall of tears rushing forth, and she cried noisily
 Burying her face in her hands, and letting herself go
 She whispered softly an unintelligible phrase
 Getting louder and louder
 Until she's screaming, "I love you"
 And then she falls sleep
 Emotions wore her out
 She sleeps a dreamless sleep
 And stops crying

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: This beautiful, tender poem is so evocative of the sad, inevitable end of a relationship, Dominic. You don't say what has happened, why it's ending, how you feel, it's all about her. What you leave out if as affective as what you include. That's brilliant writing. Congratulations.



I Miss My Family

i miss my mom
 and my little baby girl
 so much
 i wish i can be with them
 right now
 i cry every night
 i try not to cry
 i wish i can hold my little girl
 trying to picture holding her
 i don't want my mom to bring her
 it makes me mad a lot
 because i want to see her
 but when my mom comes to see me
 she starts to cry
 so she don't come
 even to see me no more
 so when i call her
 she start crying
 so i stop calling to my house
 so i just love my mom so much
 i wish she will come see me
 before i go to c y a
 and i want to see my baby girl
 to love you always
 te amo mi mama y señora

-Sarillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem will bring tears to the eyes of so many of your readers, who, like you, are locked inside juvenile hall missing their mothers and their children, whom they are not seeing at all — no visits, no calls. The pain is so intense, the loneliness so deep, it testifies to the love in your heart, even if it feels like an unmet need. Make your life right. Use your time at CYA to change your mind and your heart, so when you're released you can truly make that good, new start. For your

Daddy Acted Like He Didn't Care

My brother died right in front of me. I told my daddy and he acted like he didn't care that my brother was deceased, he acted like he care more about his drugs more then he cared about my brother death and my disability.

I can't believe how my daddy betrayed me, my mama and my brother. The only thing we tried to do was just to love him. I mean we gave him stuff, bought him stuff, we even bought him a car, but the only thing he bought us back was harm. He use to beat my mama if she even dropped a tear.

I used to run up stairs jump under my covers crying in fear wanting to tell my daddy to stop, but if did that I would be too scared and would back down or I would get popped. My daddy would hit my mama with his fist or even hit her up side the head with a broom stick. My mama would tell my daddy to stop hitting and I would be on the stairs crying and watching.

I'm still trying to fight these tears, trying not to let my daddy see that I'm surrounded by fear. So, as that is happening I hear my brother whispering in my ear saying, baby girl don't cry cause this ain't going to happen to mama till the day she die, cause no matter what, the angel God watches over you and mama every time y'all cry.

-Young Keece, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Young Keece, your mom is a very strong woman to tolerate that kind of abuse for so long. She must be very tired. You may be too scared to fight back physically, but you can fight back by supporting your mom. Importunely we don't pick our parents, and you were given a bad deal, but that doesn't mean that you have to put up with this kind of violence. Having faith in God will help you get through. You and your mom need to find a way to build a life without this horrible man. Peace - and thanks for sharing this very personal part of your life with us.

Things About My Life

The things I don't like about my life is when somebody does something bad and they know that it was wrong and they also know that it is going to effect them later. But, they won't stop doing the crime. They think that they are going to get away with it but they don't. You don't even know or think when the consequences are going to come back.

This other thing about life that I don't like is when you're locked up and you've been thinking about your family, your girl and the things you miss.

-Javier, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: Lots of feelings in this piece of work. Sometimes it can be hard to think about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes, we just want to do what we want to do without thinking that anything bad could happen. Unfortunately, if we don't stop for a moment and think about our futures, we could very likely end up doing something hurtful to ourselves, others or even our families. Nobody wants to have to sit behind bars wishing that they should have just stopped a moment and thought before they acted. Here's a challenge for you - next time you are in a situation that you have a bad feeling about... Stop...Think...then Act!

Government Knocks

This be Reese comin' at y'all from B5 tellin' all my inmates to keep good spirits, faith, and hope.

If there one thing I could tell you is do NOT let nobody take your faith. Be determined to get out of the system because all we are in here is goons in training, training to go to some prison. Y'all see with your eyes what they building out there — new jails and juveniles. We like government knocks. They waiting for they come-up for somebody to do somethin' stupid so they can lock that ass up, real talk.

The world is giving us the chance to do right, but what they're not doing is giving us the support we really need. It's like telling somebody to cook a soul food dinner and all they know how to do is heat up some Lean Cuisines.

So, what I'm sayin' is keep yo' faith and be strong.

-Reese B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a homerun, RCC. There's not one word in this piece that we can disagree with. You nailed it. But, having said that the government is setting y'all up to fill those jails and juvenile halls they're building — which is true — it makes even clearer that the only change that you can expect to do any good has to come from you. The system's waiting for you to fall into their trap and keep them in business. The best revenge is to do good and frustrate their hopes for your future.

I Am

I am a daughter

I am a teenager

I am gay

I am a drug addict

I am a writer

I am a hurt child who desperately seeks attention from my father

I am a girl who sat alone at night and cried when my dad passed out

I am one of many who would stay awake at night listening to the cries of my mother

I am ashamed of my past and scared for my future

I am a serious person

I am alone in my feelings

I am sick of this drama that constantly circles around my world

I am the one you make fun of to make yourself feel better

I am the one that was left alone

I am the female who longs to be different but turns out exactly the same

I am the child left behind in rehab because I have no other options or way to turn my life around

I am the one who always makes mistakes

This is who I am

This is me

-Kalifornia, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You are all these things... and so much more! If anyone makes fun of you to make themselves feel better, it's them that we feel sorry for! What you've gone through is a crucible that has tempered your soul. Like good steal, you have been strengthened in the fire, and you have come out much stronger than you know. Yes, you have made mistakes that have hurt you, and slowed your progress in the world. But none of those mistakes is permanent. All can be overcome! You are, indeed, a writer! Don't stop writing!

Beast To Society

beast, to the media
that is what they call me
beast, is what individuals call me
— why? do they care 'bout us?
do you love yourself? you better
because society doesn't care
they want us to kill each other anyway
that's why they keep the semi's and fully's
flowin' through america
dope flowin' through also
just look at it
if you're in my beautiful african skin
you're bound to go through being neglected
'cause of my skin i've been
especially everyday family problems
pain from experience
not excused
just misguided as a youth
wasn't told the truth
startin' doin' the wrong thing
menace to society
the ghetto was my home
it messed up my dome real bad
society didn't believe in me
not like they did to malcolm x
so i didn't believe in myself
do you know that the k k k
want us to keep killing off our race
in the ghetto so
they can rape out beautiful women
imagine this — your mother or little sister
getting raped by them racist pigs
let us stop goin' off what society say
reality check all my brothers

-Mama's Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your lyrical plea to others trapped in this incarcerated reality just like you, uses the truth as a weapon more powerful than a gun 'cause everyone who reads your lyric will have a seed planted in his spirit. And if your reader feels it deep enough, he'll nurture that seed and protect its new growth when times get rough. Then when it starts to grow into a tree, your words of truth will bear fruit for an entire community. Free yourself, put your wisdom to words, and multiply the wealth — 'cause incarceration is bad for your money and mental health.

Dream Or Nightmare

The best part of my life used to be the 20% that was spent dreaming. I hate waking up from a dream just to face the reality I was running from.

When I picked up drugs, it was like my whole life turned into a dream. I would only remember things faintly and faces were nothing but a blur. I would wake up the next morning not knowing if my actions the day before were really my actions or just a dream.

I liked not knowing the difference between dreams, drugs, and reality. But my dream life was starting to affect my loved ones negatively, and I realized I need to wake up from this dream before it becomes a nightmare.

-Owrgunizum, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We truly admire the honesty of this piece — admitting that you liked not knowing the difference between reality and dream. But, of course, what we really like is that you have made a decision to wake up, keep your eyes open, and stay alert. You have much too much going for you to return to that life that keeps you in a state that is not quite dreaming and not quite waking. Sleep at night, and have pleasant dreams. Stay fully awake at other times, and make something of your life.

All I Have Ta Give

I don't feel like I can push on in life
When the people that I love keep on dyin'
But I gotta keep my head up
I can't keep cryin'

I gotta take the loss,
And learn ta live wit' it
But all the pain that it cost
I'll never forget it

They say what don't kill you just makes you stronger
Well then where is the strength
I can't wait no longer

The pain is unbearable,
But I'll have ta live
And keep doin my best in life
Givin' all I have ta give

RIP to my grandma and to my boyfriend
Hold it down up there till I get there!
I love y'all

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The strength is inside you, the strength is in your hands and in your words. You may not see it, but we do. Everything you work on, every piece you submit to us, touches someone's life. And that someone in return will always remember your words, and touch someone else. We can understand the impulse to give up in the face of so much death, but it is precisely because of those deaths that you cannot give up! As long as you live, those you love also can live through you. Don't disappoint them or yourself. One day, you will have that happy reunion, but there's no need to hurry the process.

A PC World

I am writing about the bureaucracy of this world. This inside world:

a world behind concrete walls,
a world where nothing means what it's supposed to mean,

a world created by politicians,
a world created to please the public,
a world where guards are called counselors,
where your cell is your cottage,
where bail doesn't exist,
where you're not tried by twelve of your peers but by one possibly biased judge,
where you're not sentenced but adjudicated.

It all means the same...

a world where you play ball in a birdcage,
a world in a revolving door in and out, in and out, around and around.

When will it end? The answer is never!
a world that gives prosperity to guards, cooks and teachers

at the expense of the next generation,
a world that I am now a part of,
a world that I will be only to happy to leave.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Let this be the last brush you have with this world, which you have described so clearly in this tight piece. In one way, we're glad you've had this bitter experience, Zoltan, because we want you to take this experience and, using your obvious gifts for self-expression, make the world understand what this system is all about, and why other models are so much better to deal with the problems that put young people here. We hope we're not putting too much weight on your shoulders by telling you that we have very high expectations for you to live up to your potential!

keep your head up and always
remember what does not kill you will
make you stronger!

Speaking Spanish With My Mother

I went home on my home visit, and, for some reason, I called my mother and spoke to her in Spanish. I checked in with her and told her all that's happened in my life since last year when she saw me. She said she was proud.

Right before we hung up, I told her I called because I wanted to tell her that I wasn't mad at her for anything and that I don't hate her. She started crying, hella crying! She said, "Thank you." And she said that she feels like I lifted a boulder off her fragile body. She was like, "I love you so much." But I couldn't say it back.

Hopefully, now that I forgave her, she would want to make the choice to do better. I forgave her because I was just like: Screw it, I'm going on with my life, regardless, without her bringing me down. And my grandmother has custody of my lil' brother anyways.

I felt as if I couldn't hold her down with my hate because I am accomplishing so much. I don't have time to put the energy it takes to hate someone. I've got my future on the line right now.

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those of us readers who remember the pieces you wrote about your growing up with your mother's drinking problem and outrageous behavior, etc., can truly appreciate both the generosity of heart and the clarity of thought you demonstrate in this piece. When we keep feeding hate in us, hate keeps feeding on us, and we keep messing up. You're focused now on yourself and what you need to accomplish. Man, as we see it, truly, for you, the sky is the limit. (We loved the story of your learning English playing online games. Would you write a piece for us about it? And tell us in more detail about the college courses you're taking online now!) You are an inspiration! Maybe even your mother can take some strength from your example, but, you know, she is not your responsibility: you are!

Finding Strength

What's up Beat? This is my first time writing. I never heard of y'all before I came to SEF. I just wanted to write a little bit of my experience. I am a 17 year old female, locked up and looking forward to three to five years for four felony charges (three to five years each).

The worst part is that I have a five year old son. His father is away in Iraq and wanting to kill himself because of my actions. I just want to get my story out and let the youngsters out there know to keep their heads up and don't mess up anymore. Ya'll don't want to end up having to be a parent and have to be away from your child. It's not fun at all! I love that little boy and knowing I can't be with him breaks my heart.

The whole gangs and drugs - drop that shhh while you can. When I get out, I have to look forward to tryin' to get out of the game that I've been playin' since I was twelve! It's not gonna be pretty!

To all ya'll that are in deep trouble, keep your head up and always remember what does not kill you will make you stronger!

-Samantha /SEF, Maricopa County

From The Beat: This is an extremely strong piece of writing. We can feel your hurt, anger, rage and regret for the things that you have done in the past. Instead of dwelling on your mistakes and the past, it seems as if you are reaching out to others and trying to help them to stop doing harm to themselves, their lives and their families. What a courageous thing to do! We think that what you are saying is very true - Stop messing up! It doesn't take you anywhere in life. It just creates hurt and sadness. We wish you luck with getting your life back together. It won't be easy but it sounds as if you have already survived worse. Remember what you just said - "That which does not kill you, makes you stronger" - Friedrich Nietzsche

When I Was Little

My dreams were high,
Reaching for the sky,
I was to be a complete,
No one could defeat,
I didn't want to run,
My dream was to be #1,
I stood tall,
No one could make me fall,
I would never crawl,
I was born to ball,
Battles were easy,
No one could defeat me,
I was blind of what was ahead,
I remember someone said "you will fail"
I blew it off because I grew...
When I was little...
I blew that off too.

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem says so much. Do you still have sky-high dreams for yourself? We hope so. Don't blow off the next chapter of your life!

Respect

Respect means a lot, because if you do not respect somebody you will get killed, so that's why respect means something. Because now kids our age don't have respect for nobody. That's why kids are always getting killed, because people want they respect. Now people get mad and retaliate. When you retaliate, you are on the map or on the news in Oakland for the high murder rate. And it's all over respect.

Now the sad part is when you put your friend or your family member on a white t-shirt that says RIP loved one, always on my heart. Now respect is taking care of yourself and having a job and paying your own rent. Oh yeah, if you got a girl and she's pregnant, you be there for the baby and your girl and take responsibility. That will make you a man, and you will have a lot of respect from family and respect.

That's respect. Peace out, this was yo' boy Lil' Sam. God bless everybody.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now see, if you mean this, and you can live by the wisdom that you just wrote, you can be proof that the youth of Oakland, and troubled youth everywhere, can rise above the BS that the streets try to put on them. You can be a hope, an example to follow, a new way of defining respect.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Courage

What does courage mean to me?
To me it means that you are never to give up on what you are trying to achieve.
It also means that you have to at all times keep your head up;
whether it's hard times or good times you just have to have courage.
And never let someone else tell you wrong, 'cause that person could be trying to take you down with them
because they don't have the courage.
So to overcome that you have to just go your own way and keep an positive attitude
and never let no one tell you different about yourself.
And if you have courage and someone just always have to believe in them and also yourself and what you need from that person.
Just keep courage and faith and I believe good things will happen to you
or that person will help you out.
So it just means you have keep faith and courage in whoever or or what ever.
Also keep a positive mind with courage in it and I believe every thing will be ok;
I believe.
That's what I think it means!!!

-Romell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe with you that a positive mind, especially during hard times, is most important. Sometimes it takes courage just to believe.

Society Ruined My Life

Since I was young, society told me that I would get pregnant young, be on welfare and never marry.
Society taught me that a black woman gets used.
Growing up all the black women were unmarried,
on welfare with hella kids.
All the adults smoked weed and drank.
I thought it was normal until I grew up and got a look at the world through enlightened eyes.

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What does the world look like now Brandi? And how did you become enlightened? Continue to break the stereotypes that are so easily placed on you!

Society Failed My Life...

Society failed me in so many ways. And yeah, I probably failed myself too. But for the most part, I did my time for a year and five months, completed the program and graduated from high school. And now they don't want to help me with how I could do better with my future. They think they know what's best for me.

Since day one in this system, there still hasn't been no easy way out. It's more easy for us to go out on them streets and get a gun and make easy money. When I try and live the way the white man want me to live, I get nowhere. I'm looking at this from a different angle and still changing, even though I probably don't have to change. Maybe my environment and community need to change, not me!

(To be continued)

-Gia GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sure you're right, your environment and community do have to change. But let's keep it real... that's not going to happen. Therefore, it's up to you. You say that when you "try and live the way the white man want" you to live, you get nowhere. Is that why you're here, because you tried to live the way the white man wanted you to? It seems to us that whatever you're doing isn't working for you. It's very clear from how you write that you have great abilities to draw from (which many people don't have). That doesn't mean things should be easy for you. Of course they won't be easy. In fact, you have no easy choices. You only have hard ones. Is being locked up under the control of strangers easy? Congratulations on graduating high school. What is the help you need which "they" won't give you? What is the help you need to succeed?

Maybe my environment and
community need to change, not me!

Feeling Change

In life things don't go as planned. Like being here in the halls... nobody planned to be here. We did something wrong and we came to YGC, you got caught. Sometimes I wish that I just went the other way. I didn't, so I don't stress over it.

I can say that I'm doing my time and my grandmother's doing it with me every step of the way. She's always coming up here to see me. I just started doing better in school too before I came in. I got a 3.57 GPA, and I'm proud of that, because if you know me, I love being in the streets. I love the drama that comes with it.

They call me Cash Banga, Young Dollar, and Young World, but my real name is DeSean J. Jr. When you see me on the streets you could look at me, tell that I got money. But you don't see me on the block selling. That's 'cause I got two girls to do it for me.

But other than that, I made a decision that I am going to change because I'm 18 now. I want to be free. I'm tired of being locked up, and I got a plan when I leave up outta here, and that's what's gonna keep me out of jail 'cause I'ma stick to it. Keep ya head up

-Cash B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Although not as powerful as your poem, this piece, too, speaks of change. Change comes to everyone, the only difference is those who direct the changes they want in their lives (as you are doing), and those who let others make those changes for them (as you've done up to now). No, you didn't plan to be in the hall, but you lived in a way that promised the hall as a likely consequence. Now you're making the mature decision to live in a way that is likely to lead to a better education, a job, a better life — and a grandmother who has nothing but pride for the grandson she loves!

My So-Called Childhood

When I was little, shhh, I can hardly remember having a so-called childhood. Shhh was bad in the household. My mom was raising five-bad-ass-kids on her own, while my father was drunk in the streets or locked up. I remember goin' to different stores shop liftin' for my lil brothers and sisters 'cause they was crying for a piece of candy or a toy my mom couldn't afford to buy. That was me puttin' a smile on my lil' loved one's face.

When I was little, I roamed the streets constantly. I was an 8-9 years old, lookin' out for the police while the older homies moved that product for distribution.

My mom didn't really notice my absence, 'cause she had her hands full with the other bad ass kids. But when she did notice, I would get my ass whooped. But it still didn't make a difference. I'd still be doin' my thug thang. But I'd have to look out for the police and my momma. It was rough but it made me who I am today and on everything. I wouldn't change nothing of my past. One Love,

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that wherever you are, after earning your release, that this BW finds you. The last piece you ever wrote for us was also your best, NOT because you talked about bad things, but because you told a little about who you are by talking about how you came to the person you are today. It's amazing, even while you were breaking the law and "messing up" you were also doing the best you could to take care of your family the only way you knew how. In your shoes, we can't say we might not have made the same choice. And now, here you are, an adult, and do you have a choice? You do, you know. You don't have to keep on this path that will take you away from your loved ones. You could go to school, and you could prove your loyalty to the hood by breaking away from its destruction, getting a job, a life, and then showing young people like your little brothers and sisters that they can have a good life. You wanted to give them Candy, but you have so much more to give them: Freedom, heart, wisdom, life skills. First you have to earn those things for yourself though. How will you do that?

My Space, The Pirate Cove

Such a grand idea for my warehouse, right? On the bottom level I'll have a coffee shop and it'll be comfortably large/comfortably small-comfortable, with books under the tables you can read from my collection. There'll be plants everywhere and I'll be putting my art up. Anyone can bring their art in.

And then of course me making coffee really good 'cause I know how, tea too. And then at night people can come and share books, pieces, poetry, they wrote and bands'll come and play. It'll be like a venue (but I hafta like the band), and just a place people can chill.

I don't want it to be that professional. Just come and kick it! At the Pirate Cove!

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We can't wait to come and kick it at the Pirate Cove. It sounds like a warm and friendly place, and it's a great goal to work towards. When did you come up with this fine idea? (And how did you learn to make really good coffee?)

My Angel

She hugged me and kissed me
From the day I took my first breath
And she has always loved me and been there for me
That's why I love her to death

She is an angel from God
Straight out of heaven
She is beautiful and young
She's just thirty-seven

She has beautiful brown eyes
And a wonderful smile
But since I messed up in the streets
I haven't seen that in a while

And I'm really sorry
For making your beautiful eyes rain
Because I know I put you through
So much stress and pain

You come visit me
All the times in the halls
We cry and suffer, 'cause for now
I gotta stay behind these walls

But I know soon
God is gonna let me out
So we need to be strong and have faith
And don't ever doubt

And I'm gonna love you forever
Because you're the best
And you know who I am, mom
The one who gots your name tatted on his chest

She is the beautiful lady
Who loved me
And cared for me
Since birth

I love her to death
And I'll give her my life
'Cause, damn, to tell you the truth
That's what's she is worth

-Lil' Chuch, Marin

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem you've written about your mom. Have you sent it to her? She sounds like she deserves to know how grateful you are to her. Some mothers truly suffer when their kids are in juvy, partly because there's not too much she can do if you get in trouble, scared, lonely, angry, confused, etc. In juvy, basically, you're on your own. If you're okay up in there, why don't you let her know? She may feel very relieved to know that.

My Story, Chapter 1

Since The Beat wanted to find out about my life, I'm a start my life story book here. Since I'm being asked about my life, plus I do have five months 18 weeks and 142 days left.

Well I'm gonna be here all the way to November 12th, my birthday. I'm gonna be 18. I'm really not ready to be 18, but hey I wasn't ready for life period, so to all eyes and care this is my life story

What you about to read hopefully every week is the facts of my life of how I dreamed...

Love For The Last Time, October 31, 1999

In the beginning the end starts first and the first end last. 1999, Halloween day, me and my oldest brother Laron was cruising in his 2000 Cadillac Seville STS. His two eighTEENS kicked from the MTX thunder TA amplifier; eighteen riding on twenties, man.

My brother was in high school on his way to Florida State with a full scholarship to play hoop. Laron was my father in a brother position and in a position of a brother he was my best friend.

I was nodding my head to the music and the vibration tickled my ear drums. "Bling bling every time I come around y'o city bling bling." Laron laughed.

I was cheering flashing my two front gold one's. I grabbed both of my ear lobes and flashed my two karat diamond earrings Laron bought me. L

aron's phone rang and interrupted my video imagination. He turned down the music with the remote and answered his phone and conversated with the person. He pulled up to some apartments and parked.

"Pooh I be right back aight."

I nodded, he closed the door.

I rolled down the window and grabbed the remote to turn the music back up. Shine slapped hella hard I was nodding my head feeling the slap.

By then I stopped nodding when I seen a big booty girl walking up the stairs to the apartment. I jumped to the driver's side and opened the door. "Hey girl come here!"

She looked at me and smirked.

I turned the music down she then turned around. "Boy how old are you,"

She looked over the candy yellow STS, "And who car you in?"

"This my brother's car. And it don't matter how old I am."

She laughed. "Little boy, you too cute. " To be continued.....

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, you're off to a great start. We really like your story-telling style—so many good details. It's something we don't see very often. Nice work. Bring on chapter 2! You have us hooked already.

Every now and then I catch my mom
crying, and I ask her what's wrong
and she tells that I'm turning out to
just like my dad, in and out of jail.

Beat Staff — Total Weenies!

(With English accent)... Dear Beat People:

I surmise that you bloody bastard jerks are total weenies. WEENIES I say! You soft poodlettes only like a crappy-ass "I'm sorry but I'm better!" type bullshhhh, whether it's fake or not. All y'all like to hear is, "Oh my God, I'm like so sorry but I'm a changed person!"

I don't care. I'm gonna eat 'shrooms in my room. SURPRISE! Man, I'm starting to get perplexive against testimonial orangutans. I'm gonna change myself though. When I get out I'm gonna go to college! I will listen to my mother and father like I actually care about them. Because I DO! I am so sorry. Viva la revolucion!

-Meen B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: (With German accent)... Damn! We were so tempted to give you a Piece Of the Week for this masterpiece... Not!... We're sorry we appear to be weenies to you, but we have to be as real as we can (in our weenie world) even when it leaves you fuming! We wish you'd spend more time telling us about you, your place in the world, your plans for your place in the world, and how you plan to carry those plans out. Spending all this time telling us what jerks we are is kind of a waste of your time, don't you think? We get your point. We don't agree. We are not going to change... and the question we have for you is, are you? At least to the point where you're not forced to give up your freedom and have to deal with a bunch of weenies like us? Oh yes, indeed, ; Viva La Revolucion!

Living The Life Of A Cholo

Man, life is crazy when you out there gang banging, knowing at any moment it could be game over. The street is my home because the streets is all I know. Living the crazy life. Being a gang banger is a full-time job, having to be on my P's and Q's, watching out for those that are out to do harm.

I sell dope for money. Gang banging and selling dope and having sex is all I know. Joined a gang at the age of 12. I started early in the game. Most are 16–18 when they join, so I had to act like I was 18 which led me to have a lot of fights. When I joined, I knew that I could be shot, but that didn't stop me. If I could go back in time I wouldn't change a thing because I taught myself how ride a bike, how not to be no punk, and how to be a man. My real dad never came around to show me these things and I think that's why I turned out to be bad. So I got together with a guy that took care of me from when I was 5 to 7.

Now he's in the pen doing hard cold time for trying to take care of me and my mom. Now I can only hope to see him someday. He left me like my real dad, but I cannot cry because I have no feelings because I have grown used to people walking out on me and giving up hope in me. Every now and then I catch my mom crying, and I ask her what's wrong and she tells that I'm turning out to just like my dad, in and out of jail. The only thing that's holding me together up in here is my mom and my little brother. Man if it weren't for them two I'll just wild out.

I don't want my little brother to be like me in a gang or in and out of jail. I want him to go to school and I want him to enjoy the better things in life. If they let me out I'm going to do what I got to do and set a good example for my little brother.

Well, it looks like it's time to go. I'll see y'all next week.

-Menace B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very good, very well written piece Menace, and we thank you for keeping it real with us. Now it's our turn to keep it real with you. You ever think about having kids Menace? Are you going to be like your dad and walk out on your kids when they are young (or let the state take you from them)? Do you want them to see you going in and out of jail, gang banging, and dealing dope in the street? You said the street and gang banging is all your know, but think of your life before you knew all that. When we come into the world, we don't know how to walk or talk, but we grow up and learn to run. As long as you are willing to learn — which is the same as saying as long as you're willing to grow — you will learn much more than the little war you are in. As many experiences as you have already had, there are a million more that you have not had, and a world out there that you don't know. Have a little courage, and venture out of what you know into new territory, something that will expand your future and something that will bring you success in life. There is no doubt in our mind that your little brother will follow the model that you give him. What do you want to be responsible for?

When I Was Young

when I was young
I had hair to my booty
Now I'm bald headed...
Not really but close enough.
I had smooth honey skin
Now I have scars all over my legs
From that stinkin' track
I was so pure But it's
So different now.
I never thought I'd be the
Type of girl wit' bullet wounds
All over my body...
When I was little
I was so innocent.
What happened?
Life.

-Furly Gurly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What kind of girl did you think you would be when you were that innocent little girl? The truth is that most of us turn out different than we thought we would, but that doesn't mean you can't use your experience to be a better you. Hardships are the best tools for learning, and if you can learn from yours you can only grow.

Life, Part 2

life is so strange
only a chosen few
make it out of poverty using their brains
fascinated by the power and fame
intrigued by the money in the game
taught to never go against the grain
trying to feed a hunger that can't be tamed
living a life of shame
it can leave you confused
emotionally and mentally deranged
it's a life of devastation, pain
father figures dead or incarcerated
predominantly black areas passionately hated
why should we give in
to this system that's two-faced
intelligent mind locked up in this place
media call us a disgrace
and we let them degrade our race
every time you hear of a robbery
it's a brown or black face
life is strange
it can leave you emotionally and mentally deranged

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes just giving articulate voice to pain can help keep a grown man sane. And to identify and clearly outline our real problems, can go a long way toward making it possible for us to solve them. No easy answers in a struggle like this, but your passionate and eloquent poems help your more serious readers persist in the fight to make things right in their life for themselves and their communities as well. Major props for marrying your intelligence with your lyrical chops.

My failures glamorized

My achievements are overlooked

... sitting in this place all by myself
made me think

It's Funny How

It's funny how I don't remember you being there for me,
And you wasn't there when he violated me.
It's funny how you wasn't even around,
When I was giving up, and my tears hit the ground.
It's funny how my mind is in a daze,
I wish it never happened and my heart begins to race.
It's funny how no matter what I do,
It's nothing I can say or get through to you.
It's funny how I was giving up on my self,
And instead of doing the right thing and looking for help.
It's funny how now I see,
And now I'm working towards a better me.
It's funny how it's time to let it go
And stop being negative and let positive things show.

-Tea Etta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece. The reader learns a lot about your emotional state and how your dealing with your pain, but you manage to keep it short and solid. It is funny that in order to work towards being better individuals we have to first let go of other people's flaws and the many ways in which they can affect us. When you pay attention you realize how much we can create our own realities.

When I was little
I was so innocent.
What happened?

Incarceration

In my little corner of the world,
Violence and pain
In a crowd, yet lonely
Trying to rise above, but held back by those who say they
care
Please awake me when I'm free
I cannot bear captivity
I'm expected to fail
So I ended up in this freaking cell,
Waiting and waiting for any mail,
By those who said they cared,
But soon I was forgotten when I was nailed
Backed into a corner,
Alone and very confused,
But there is no one to blame for the friends I choose
My failures glamorized
My achievements are overlooked
That's why I ended up at the station
Getting freaking booked,
Now I'm locked up for some stupid shhh I did
Now I promised myself the crime
I did I will neva eva commit
'Cause sitting in this place all by myself made me think,
So I just wanna do my time and get out of this messed up
system.

-Menace B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have so much going for you (and so much going against you...). Not everybody has your ability to think clearly, to see where things lead, to understand the connections between the promises you hear (from the system, from your homies, from everyone) and the reality you see. So you have the ability to understand that your fate is in your hands. The liars will continue to lie. The system will continue to hurt kids. The homies will continue to forget you each time you're out of sight and out of mind. So it's up to you. We can't take away the circumstances of your life or the choices you've already made, but we can put our hopes in you to bring your life into conformity with your mind (doing what you already KNOW is the right thing to do). We need people like you out here helping to make this corrupt world a better place. Are you up to that task?

You

your brought me joy
and i brought you pain
when it was sunny outside girl
i brought the rain
you were my everything
but i played you like a game
you were my warm sunny night
and i was your hurricane
now it ain't the same
i want you back so much
it's drivin' me insane
i'll throw away my fortune
all my money and fame
just to have a second chance
with your mind, body, soul and brain
i threw it all away
right down the drain
it was all my fault
i'm the one to blame
i wish i could take it all back
erase your memory of the bad
make it black
have you smiling all good
sitting on my lap
i'm stuck to you now
like a tree with sap
i won't ever let go
rain, sunshine, even snow,
i'm a hold you down for real
this ain't no show
i loved how when you blushed
your face used to glow
how you used to laugh
when i used to flow
you always loved me
but i'll always love you mo'

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful love poem, deepened by your remorse for what you've done to, well, really to both of you, but in doing yourself in like this, you recognize the pain and distress you've brought into your loved one's life. We hope you get that second chance, not only at your romance but at the life you live, for that's the earth in which you plant the love you have to give.

Weed Got The Best Of Me

I don't know what made me give up, but one thing I do know is that I let myself give up on my life. I let myself down, also I let my family down, because of drugs.

At the time I didn't know what was the reason was for my actions; maybe I did but I didn't want to admit it to myself. I smoked a lot of weed then that's when it first began. I got addicted, most people won't admit that but that's the truth.

I gave up on myself first then my peers and the people who wanted to help me. Weed got the best of me. I gave up on school. My brother and sisters etc., then the pills came and I felt invincible like the rules don't apply to me.

I don't want to be telling a life story, so long story short I let weed take over my life and if I didn't come to the hall this time I wouldn't have realized that now is the time for me to change my life and give it to the lord. When I leave here, I'm going to leave here a new man.

-Heem Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you're taking the lessons this trip to the hall has taught you seriously, just keep your resolution strong and don't get sucked back in once you're back on the streets.

Tired Of This

B2 is hella weak. I'm sick of this. The shhh is so fake. People smiling in yo' face but really trying to stick you. Ain't no love in these streets. We losing out here. Every time I hit the block I'm losing. I lost love ones to this weak-ass game.

Keep it real with you, forget with everyone think about you. Be all you can be. Hit college! See another side of town. The block ain't everything. Do this fo' your loved ones, yo' dead homies, yo' mom. Keep it lit, I'm out.

-Stoffice B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Stoffice, we hope you will take your own advice and do the things you are telling others to do. In order for people to listen to you, you have to be an example first and lead them on. Yes, do it for all those people who've meant so much in your life — and do it for yourself!

you were my warm
sunny night
and i was your hurricane
now it ain't the same

My Life Is Crazy

My life is so crazy that it's not funny; a lot can happen in two years, it can change a good normal kid into a hardcore gangster.

It all started with "that lie" that changed my life because when you're lied to in that kind of way you don't know what to do. So I turn to my OG's and my homies.

I needed someone that was going to show me how to be a gangster. It was real easy at first, but I really started to see how hard it really can get when you start to lose people.

After a few months I started to see that I can get used to it, like getting shot at, getting jumped, and police always messing with you. It wasn't that hard but at the same time it was. So you just have to live with the things that happen.

Like me I was cut in the face. It was 2 cm away from cutting my left eye out, but that did not stop me from being who I am.

I got shot at one time and almost lost my ankle because the bullet missed my ankle by an inch, but that still did not stop me from being who I am.

But to tell you the truth I think the only thing that is going to stop me from being who I am is for me to lose my life. But until then I am going to live mi vida loca (my life is crazy)

-Scarface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say it's hard to lose people to gang life, but then you say you won't stop until you die. Don't you think you need to reevaluate? What about the people who care about you—what will they feel if they have to lose you to senseless violence? Why are you setting yourself up to fail? Why don't you challenge yourself and challenge other readers to see beyond the pain that this lifestyle brings?

Don't Wake Me Up, 'Cause I'm Dreaming

When I was sleeping, I dreamed that I was at my court and the judge let me go, and so I left the halls and I was in my mom's car and she bought me BK (Burger King). And I went home and started to watch TV, and after that, I got dressed to go to the fair, and I was about to open my door to go out, and all of a sudden I woke up in my cell and in my juvy clothes.

-Bacon, Marin

From The Beat: It must have at least temporarily broken your heart to wake up and realize that you were still in juvy. Is your day in your dream just about what you would be doing if you were home and free? Do you ever dream about what you need to change in your life to make sure you never mess up and have to go back to juvy? Or do you already know in your real life what you have to do or not do to stay free?

California Dreamin'

Do I ever recall when I was havin' such a good dream that I didn't want to wake up? Actually yeah! After being locked up for a couple of months I've had it two times. Wouldn't you believe it's what I think about it e'ry day.

The day I finally get out of juvey, go back down to da jets, go see my homies, big and little. But, you see, that's just a dream I wish I never had 'cause I know it ain't no home for me in the city no more.

I know I ain't goin' home. The DA an' the judge are going to see ta that fo' sho when I go to court and they show that videotape of me doin' my dirt in that gas station. E'ry day I wish that dream come true, that I could walk down the streets I know like the back of my hand, but that ain't happenin'.

So, truth be told, I don't ever want another dream like that again 'cause in reality this system has me and it ain't letting go. So I'll se y'all in a few years. Hopefully my so-called homies remember who took that dive for them. That's all.

-Sib B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The sad truth about this well-written sad piece is that when you play in the dirt you get dirty! It hurts us to see you giving up on your dreams because of what you're facing. Whatever happens and wherever you spend your time, try to use it to your benefit. If you are in CYA or prison, there are things you can do to prepare yourself for a future life of freedom — the kind of life that doesn't risk losing it all again. It may look hopeless from where you sit, but it won't always look like this, trust us. So don't judge the rest of your life by the snapshot that today gives you. Prepare for a better tomorrow!

Don't Wake Me, I'm Dreaming!

Because, one time I was sleeping and I had a nice-azz dream.

The dream was about one time, me and my potnas was walking it was a few of us.

Then I saw a house it was a big-azz house and it looked like no one was home. So, I told him to go knock it and then when he knocked no one opened the door so he rang the bell. Then nobody still didn't open the door. So I told them I'm gonna break in, "...one of ya'll stay out side and watch out".

Then, when me and one of my potnas in, I went in mom and dad's room and then my potna went into the kids room. I open one of the draws and I found hella diamonds and I saw a safe, then I told my potna, "Hey come and help me, I found a safe."

Then he ran in the room hella fast he said, "What you want?" Then we both carry it outside. I called my other potna with the car so he could pick us up so it wouldn't look hot walking with it.

Then when we got to my potna's house we broke open the safe and it was hella money and a gun and that was the end because my dad woke me up for school and I was like, "Ahhh!"

-Ishaba, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're lucky that's when you got woke up and it wasn't a reality. We can tell you that the rest of the story either involves violence, greed, fighting among friends or the police. Coming up on something valuable always seems good - but, remember the way you get it, will determine how you lose it.

I Was Free

When I was little
I was free

I roamed the streets of Richmond
With nothin' to worry about
No probation, no police
No people with guns
Coming after me
Now I am locked up
Gone to placement
Came back and got locked up

-Baby G, Marin

From The Beat: When you're free again and home, can you re-establish the freedom you once had as a child? Eschew anyone with guns and stay away from any mess yourself? Is there anything more precious than that feeling of innocence? You can get it back to a point if you want it badly enough.

Giving Up My Lifestyle

What I feel like giving up is the lifestyle I once lived. It's a positive giving up because I feel ready to start a life of positive stuff, doing things the right way

-Cesar B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is short but sweet. What The Beat would like to know, though, is what made you want to change, and what will you really do differently when you touch down?

Why I Hate Bein' In Jail

I hate wearing purple and khaki
I hate being in a four wall box room
I hate having to wear the same underwear two days in a row

I hate girls talking about one another
I hate only getting a three to five min. phone call
I hate sleepin' in a bed everyone's been in

I hate I have to wear broke-ass slippers
I hate walkin' around wit' my hair messed up
I hate just bein' here

That's why you don't want to be in here

-Jeannie GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How much do you hate it here? Enough to stop doing whatever it is that brought you here? If not, then we don't think you hate it enough. There is nothing nice about being here. It's designed not to be nice so that you won't want to come back. We hope you remember just how much you hated it the next time you are thinking about doing anything that might jeopardize your freedom.

Lost Souls

Here are the young men the weight on their shoulders
Waiting for glue sticks in their ragged trousers
Looking for pennies, finding only lost promises
Crimson jello and sticky hands
Scared old men sure can run old dark decrepit alleys
Shooting up in a mildewed refrigerator box
No more souls.

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Even though there are some references we can't entirely understand, that is always true when we read good poetry, since the allusions you make in the poem come out of your own experience and not ours. What you describe so graphically actually frightens us. Does it you?

Worst Crime Is Sick

I think the worst crime someone can commit is when a parent, mother or father or a family member rape their own children.

I think that is so nasty and who ever does that is sick. I think the worst is when a young boy gets raped in the butt. That is painful for anyone to go through, so a little boy, his mind gets messed up. He may grow up thinking that it's okay. That's how some boys end up gay and who ever gets raped man think it's okay to do it to some one else.

Parents are the worst, but anyone who have to take sex from someone has a problem. Rapist they really mess up people's minds 'cause some kids can't handle it, so they turn to drugs to try to forget about it or maybe they grow up thinking that's all people want is their body. Some women start to sell their bodies. Rape is the lowest thing anyone can do. So I think they should get sent to the Pen for the rest of their life.

-Aleshia Key, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right Aleshia, we can't think of a worse crime than taking advantage of someone else. Do you think that a harsh punishment will prevent these rapists from committing crimes? Why do you think that people do this? Is there a solution? Rape is horrible, and our heart and prayers go out to anyone whom has ever experienced this terrible crime, and to the ultimate crime, murder. It's so unfair, that people abuse others.

When I Was Little

When I was little everything was different. Like when I was in middle school people from different sets were getting along. Like I from the Point and ninjas in the Point wasn't beefin' like they are now. Now everyone and their momma's getting killed. Little kids aren't even safe to go to school. So that's why everything is different now then when I was little.

-Cj B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why do you think things have gotten so much worse since you were little? Life sure did seem a lot easier when we were all kids, but it's more than just getting older and facing more problems. Something is going on that's not good. Do you think things will get better, worse, or stay the same?

How Society Has Failed Me

The way society failed me is the lack of jobs for probation youth. If I had a job I wouldn't be doing some of the stuff I do on the streets. Drugs have also failed me because either way you look at it, selling or using, they're both designed to make you fail.

-Cesar B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you that society fails those who want to do legitimate work but are not allowed to. You are still young, though, so this is a failure that you can overcome simply by getting older and getting out of the system. As for drugs, yes, they do fail entire communities, but in this case, you have the individual power to use or not use, sell or not sell. It appears to us that you have had some kind of conversion to a different way of seeing the world. How did that come about?

How Has Society Failed You

How society has failed me, was that there is easy access to drugs and too many more things like weapons and violence.

The second main reason I failed society was because I heard about drugs and violence, and gangs and enjoyed and did that stuff. But then once I tried to stop doing that kind of stuff, I couldn't stop. But when I did stop I stopped for only a couple of days. But then I started because I couldn't handle the pressure from other people and also I couldn't handle the easy but bad way to get money.

-Zach, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've heard so many times how hard it is to stop once you start "all that stuff", so you are speaking for many others in a similar position. First, we wonder if you could explain more about just why it's so hard. And second, can you imagine a scenario where all of you individuals who confess you want to stop but can't, because of the haters and peer pressure, joined together to start a positive movement?

The Poem

I'm writing this poem 'cause I haven't written one in a very long time

Stop playing these games Melissa, you know you wanna be mine

These lines go perfect with what I'm tryin' to rhyme
'Cause Baby, it's hard to tell you what's really on my mind
But today

Maybe

I might tell you a lil' something

You know you meant fa Cito

And I know I ain't bluffin'

I love you and you love me

Baby

It's the truth

It's all a part of destiny

I'm tryin' hard to do the right thing but

It's hard to do it without my baby on my side

But it's all right

'Cause my destination's light is shining real bright

And tonight

Cito gonna pray to God

'Cause I need to change my life and realize what I was doing was wrong

But without Melissa

I wouldn't have been strong

But weak

Is what I would have been without my long, incarceration

'Cause change starts with a charm from God

This was all a pit stop to change what was wrong with my car

'Cause I was drivin' in the wrong direction, and this is my confession

Believe me Melissa, I would never lie to you

All I needed was some inspiration from my baby boo

Young Cito really loves you

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We continue to be encouraged by your commitment to change your life around when you get out of here, Cito. We're sure that Melissa must inspire you to do that, but we hope you make the changes you know you have to make for your sake and not for anyone else's. Those people who love and support you can make the transition easier, but the commitment to change must come from you... and be for you.

Last Week

Well, it's my last week up here at Camp! I'm up here, hella bored, and just waiting for my release date. Well, I'm going to be released this Tuesday coming up! Yup!

You know I just be up here hella thinking about the mistakes I be — or rather, I used to do. I am currently in the GED class, just trying to study my tests so that when I get out, I could get it and master it. That way I can be in a good position when I go to get interviewed by a job or something, because at least it will look good and the employer will think that I am trying to work towards getting a good career doing something positive.

Well, I'm gonna be out soon, and I am expecting that I don't come back over here or to jail. I just want everybody to think before you act and learn from you mistakes, ladies and gentlemen. Stop. Think. Act. Review.

-Brainiak, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Congratulations! We hope by the time you're reading these words, you are perhaps in our offices in San Francisco, typing up pieces for The Beat Within by writers still incarcerated. Wouldn't that be something? If not, we hope you found that better paying job and called or wrote us for a copy of this issue. We're proud of you either way.

My Pain

My mom and family; my little brother who looks up to me, he wants to be just like his older brother so that's what makes me give up, 'cause I don't want my little brother to end up in jail like me. It ain't worth it so sometime I just wanna kill myself (not really) 'cause I be hurting my family for gang related stuff like that.

My big brother just got killed and all I wanna do is take that mans life away like he took my brother's. I miss him and that hurt me when my mom told me your brother just died and I just want to stop gang related activity before I get killed or hurt my family. That's all I got to say, the end.

-Feeling Too Much Pain, 150 Crew

From The Beat: WE are so sorry for the pain you carry and the lost of your brother. You should make it your mission to be a good role model for your brother from now on—but that means being around. Destroying yourself is the very last thing you would want to do to him. Just know that as much as this pain you're feeling might seem endless, it will get better, and you always have the chance to lead a better life and learn from your mistakes. Your little brother can learn from you too. Keep your head up.

Level Three

Is just not for me,
staff hate because I know my program and my rights
I'm mad cause I'm the best worker they got.

Level three

I like it because I get all the smell-good stuff and
they hate.

Level three

It's okay sometimes, but staff think you is suppose
to walk a straight line and never mess up.

Level three

My peers hate because I get what I want, but they
just mad so I try not to feed into it.

Level three

I hope I maintain my level because the staff keeps
taking my points because I go stupid-dumb-retarded

-Rush, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Rush, stop going stupid-dumb-retarded. You know that's what is going to take your points away. Are you stupid? Dumb? Or retarded? Hopefully you are none of them! Use you brain. Duh!

About Being In Jail . . .

About being in jail is not a fun thing. I've been here for what seems a hell of a long time. But the time I spend in here I have made my mind up what I'm going to do when I get out and get a chance to go home. I have made up my mind that I'm going to get all of the negative out my head and just think positive all the time. 'Cause being in that room will make you go crazy.

But me being in jail I just keep my cool and do what I got to do and I know my time will come for me to go home. But what I learned from being locked up is this is not for me. So when I go home I'm going to change not just for me, but for my mom and the rest of my family.

-Joshua , 150 Crew

-From The Beat: Positive thoughts can make the difference between sanity and insanity in some situations. It's been proven, too, that they really do carry power—the power of intention, it's like prayer. We all play a part in creating our own realities and so it makes sense that thinking positive can only help in making positive realities... good for you and keep at it, we know it's not always easy.

Where Will You Be In One Year?

In one year I'm going to be home with my family, I hope. Teaching my son a good thing to do in life and not the wrong thing.

I want to be able to say that my son has accomplished things in life and not followed in his father's footsteps. I want him to be able to get a job and not end up with a criminal record. My son is not born yet, but I am willing to become a father and do what I've got to do to raise a family. I don't want him coming into this world seeing me disrespecting his mother.

Me and his mother have been thru a lot, but we are willing to do what ever it takes to make sure this baby has a father and mother.

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, great for you Jermaine. Turn your life around for your son! Be someone that he can look up to. You may have a criminal record, but if you can set an example for him once he is born, that's what's important! You've decided that he is going to be number one on your list of priorities, so now is the best time to get your life straight - for him. Good luck Jermaine, and congrats!

When I Was Little

When I was lil'
everybody thought that I was the quiet one.
They all thought since I was the youngest,
that I was the good one.
I'd never get in trouble.
They didn't realize
until I start getting caught
doing shhh.
When I started getting locked up
everybody really started to notice.
Especially when they find out and people started to tell.
If I can go back I would.

-Young Keith, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may not be able to go back, but you can make some changes now, so that you are not having the same regrets in three years.

Gave Up On School

What's up, Beat? This is Big Will aka Sasquatch from Hayward. I haven't wrote y'all in a minute. Well, I'm up at Camp Sweeney now, trying to do my thing. Well, now, down to business — I gave up on school because it wasn't the thing for me.

I never liked school at all, and I was never smart enough to do the work. I would try, but I never did really get any of the schoolwork. So I stopped going to school, like in the tenth grade. And I started smoking more and more, and I just started to kick it with the homies more. Well, for the time that some of the homies were in school, I would kick it with some of the homies that didn't go to school.

After a while, I started doing more and more smoking and doing drugs. Sometimes I wouldn't even go home. Well, in the end, I ended up here. That's what happens when you don't go to school. Well, I'm out, Beat! I just want to say what's up to all out there!

-Big Will, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The young man who wrote this piece is smart enough to do whatever he wants. Have you looked into the GED class at Camp? Was it math that stumped you? Whatever it was, if you want to, you can still get your degree that tells the world both that you're smart and that you're willing to work. Of course, it's not really about getting degrees that make job applications look better, it's really all about your attitude. If you can regain that willing to try attitude in the work world, trust us — you will do fine. That's if you stay away from drugs and kicking on the street day and night, you feel? Anyway, even if you have a learning disability, that makes schoolwork harder for you than for the others — we can see that you are a smart individual, which is an entirely different matter. So-called learning disabilities, really just mean that you learn differently, and that the classroom was not geared for your style or speed of learning.

When Did It Start

They say it all started when I turned seventeen, 'cause that's when I got arrested for my first time — caught driving a stolo into Taco Bell's parking lot with my homie who had shhh on him when we got searched by five-oh. We weren't even a block away from my school, sitting in the back of a cop car, with my girl watching with a sad look on her face as they took us away.

After that, I let my colors hang for everyone to see what I bang. Got kicked out of school for being in riots and starting rumbles, when I only had one more year to complete. Couldn't walk down the street without colliding with my enemies and rocking them off they' feet. Had my own watchdog; Officer Ortiz harassed me whenever he pleased. I started to come home higher than a kite or so drunk I couldn't walk straight, and that was if I even came home at all. I got tattoos and pierced my ear, knowing my grandma already threaten to kick me out if I did those things.

I got shot at while I was posting in the hood, and didn't come home at all after that. I ran away 'cause my grandma had told me never bring drama to the house. I started to run the streets night to day, thizzed out my mind with my homies. In fact, now that I think about it, the last couple of weeks before I got locked up, I can't remember a day I wasn't on some type of drug, experimenting and what not. Now look at me, finally caught up, brought to a complete stop, can't pass go and collect two hundred dollars, and definitely don't got no "Get out of jail free!" card.

This is my first time being in here. They got me in max, and they want to try my as an adult 'cause my eighteenth birthday is in a couple months. I'm fighting two felonies and a strike, for a crime my homies committed with me by their side as they ran. Now me and a homeboy I met only once, sit here in this hell-hole rotting our lives away, while a ninja I thought was my homie and someone I can trust, sang the song of a stool pigeon to do not even one day in jail, leaving us behind.

But that's all right, 'cause as I lay here in this cage, away from my family and friends, I start to wonder when did I change into what I am now? Why did I do all these things? Or was I always this way, just holding it all inside, waiting to blow up and not give a shhh 'bout my life and what my family thinks of me.

There are many possible answers to those questions. Maybe it's because I grew up in the hood with people fighting cops, selling drugs and killing each other off for wearing the wrong colors. Or maybe it's because I grew up with no father to guide me into being a good young man. Or maybe it's because my mom was in prison most of my life, and I had to live with my loving but more racist grandma — and two J-cat cousins instead of my two little brothers I lost to the system and sister I never get to see. Either way, my grandma says, "Don't blame no one but yourself for the things you done."

But when I was young, I didn't do bad, went to school, got good grades, played football, and was the one in the family everyone thought would break the chain of repeated generations of gang-banging drug dealers in and out of jail. Grandma blamed herself for all that, but now, when I'm going down instead of up, she says, "Don't blame no one but yourself." So, I don't think it started when I was seventeen. That's just when it was noticed. It started when I was brought into this mayhem home of ours called life.

One love to all fallen soldiers and those caught in the struggle to survive this life we were born into.

-Lil' Boxer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every once in a while, a first-time Beat writer just blows the lid off a topic like, "When I Was Little". You turn it aptly into "When Did It Start?" You tell us a vivid story, if a familiar one to Beat readers, of how you slid into the street until it was all you had going on in your life. With an aside, you make the crucial point that you were high so much of the time before you got caught up that you can't remember a day when you weren't — and that detail speaks volumes about where you were heading: jail, hospital or death. There's no coming back from death, but you can come back from jail if you take this first time and make it your last time. The first time, is the most crucial. Read our pages and you'll see how many of our writers have become accustomed to coming back to juvenile hall to "do time" — because they never did change their lives. If you were most likely to break the chain, you still are! The fact that you've lived this life will only make your success that much more inspirational. So many of our readers and writers are ready to divide the world into "squares" and "gangsters" — and they seem to believe, once a gangster always a gangster. Show them, show your grandma, your brothers, sister, cousins, show yourself that change is possible, that even if innocence cannot be recovered, with forgiveness you can still become who you were always meant to be — the one in your family to break the chain and stay free by living your life responsibly, intelligently — committed to a struggle far more heroic than feuding gangs.

The Worst

What is the worst crime possible?
killin' somebody before they pop you
killin', rape, suicide,
doin' bad things before you die
what do you think the worst crime is to
commit?
smoke a zip
and hope you never slip
rape a female
tell yo' potnaz
and hope they don't tell
rob a bank
hope you don't get caught
now you don't know what to think
stay low and don't come out
rob the next ninja
runnin' all through his house
now you doin' it big just as a kid
so what's the worst crime to commit?

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The way you set up this poem, it's like a Greatest Hits of Bad Deeds, and it reminds us of some of the great rap classics, like Tupac's "Shorty Wanna Be a Thug," Scarface's "Never Seen a Man Die," or to go even further old school, to Slick Rick's "Children's Story." Those are all big shoes, looks like one day you might just be ready to fill them!

Then

Always did right by doing wrong
Never chose the right path
Always running in the wrong direction
Never looking forward
Always looking back
Now
Always doing right by choice
Never choosing the wrong path
Always walking in the right direction
Never looking back
Always looking forward

-Coko, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is short and to the point, and we like it for that reason. Can you give us some insight into how this change from then to now came about?

The Day You Died

Frustration
Irritation
I can't get through without you
I miss your voice, smile and the things you do
If only I could see you
Ride or die 'till the day I die
You said to me, and then you flew
Tears I cry
Thinking about the day you died
I really miss you
Getting by is hard to do
Without you.
But I'll always keep our memories
And thinking of you
But your gone I'm-a try to be strong
Until I'll die and be with you.

-Princess, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Princess, suffering the loss of a loved one is always hard to cope with, but know that your souls will be reunited one day. Memories last forever — keep them.

Why Did I Wake Up?

You picked me up from work. We went to the liquor store. I bought a fifth of Patrone. We headed to my house.

When we got to my house, I took a shower. After I got out of the shower, I got dressed. When I was dressed, I told you I was going to go to my mom's house real quick. You said you would wait at my house. I got to my mom's house, hopped in her car and drove back to my house. When I got there, some of my patnas had showed up.

We went to a party. We all got really drunk and had a good time. Me and you drove back to my house. I parked my mom's car back at her house, walked to mine, and as I walked into my house, I didn't know where you went till you called my name from my room. Then I woke up, thinking, "Man! Why did I wake up?"

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great story! That dream felt real all the way through your telling of it till the moment you woke up — and we're sure our readers are asking as well, "Why did you wake up right then, man?"

Time To Stop

Rest in Peace Marcellus. This is to all... Our bra just died and most of us are were out when Cell died. So my point is all this pullin' licks, postin', not goin' to school, comin' back and forth to the hall, poppin' and losin' all our weight. Stop! Stop! Please in Marcellus' memory we gonna shine the legit way because I am on the verge of getting washed and I don't wanna see none of y'all to follow so on the real we can still go looney for our ninja cell in the legit way, that's how he wants it. Trust me. Love yoo ninjas, I'm out!

RIP Cell, RIP Ray, RIP Webb, RIP Rob.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep preaching, Naudie Bo, because we like what we're hearing. We are so proud of you, for sharing your sadness and grief so well, and for learning from it that grieving the legit way, instead of going out for revenge, is what your dear, lost friend would want for you. Live Long!

Hated

love ain't pain,
love ain't tears of rain
i just wanna forget yo' name
deep down inside i don't feel the same
you're the one to blame
you're not my main
you used to be my everythang
no more, i will not claim
laugh all you want, this is not a game
you're probably going insane
feeling like a car driving in the fast lane
but i have to maintain
not fall down a drain
you're like a cloud of smoke
you slipped like a bar of soap
you're out my life fast like some coke
but i cut you as easy as a piece of rope
and smoked you away like a pack of poat's
our love drifted away so slow
damn girl, i just don't want you no mo'

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nothing more bitter than love lost to the street, when you're locked up trying to change how you see to be. All your dreams of a happy little home and family, blowing away like smoke in the wind. It's less that the love is gone than it's become a source of pain, and for sure then love doesn't feel the same — it dips toward hate, then again wishes it wasn't too late, then rage, then dead calm, and goes on and on till it's finally done. But when it's your baby's mama, there's no end heart's trauma — just don't quit on your own flesh and blood, no matter what the drama.

Work the System

I'm going to college now, straight from the computer! Trying to get my AA in Business. The government is paying for me to go to college because I'm a ward of the state and, therefore, considered to be independent. So, what I'm saying to you is: Work the system, don't let it work you!

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You were telling us about your college course, and we can verify that you truly are working! You're working the system and you're putting in the work to make all this work pay off for you. We see a bright future for you if you can keep a clear head after your release, too, and keep doing what you need to do.

The Time I Gave Up

Yes, there was a time when I gave up. It was when I was on the outs.

I got out in mid April, 2006. I started doing good, I went back to school and all, I was doing all my things I needed to do that the judge ordered me to do. I was doing really good that even my probation officer would tell me that she was proud of me all the time, but then I started hanging out with the wrong people, and started slippin'.

I started comin' in past my curfew and just doing whatever. That lasted about two weeks.

I kind of started back on track, taking care of my things but then everyone just started telling me, "oh I know you will mess up again, you're gonna go back to the hall, it don't matter what good things you're doing I know you're about to go back soon, you trying too hard to be good, it's not worth it you still gonna get caught up doing something violating your probation," and just all kinds of negative things towards me.

So I was like yeah your right, I'm gonna do what I want, I'm going back anyways because I got a warrant out for my arrest. So I gave up on tryin' to do good and I left my house and came back to jail, just like everyone else said I would.

-Margarita, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you got sucked into everyone else's hype and now you're paying for it. Low expectations are really hard to combat, but next time we hope you'll listen to the voice inside you that says you can do it. You live with your own decisions, so you should make them yourself.

My Dream

my dream was so great
i was up outta this place
back in hawaii makin' paypa
a hip-hop legend surround with money and fame
it's cool but matta'a fact
forget all of that
my mother's there, i got a girl and my lil' brother's
back
i got his name, birthday and a clover on my chest
jus' so the love wasn't lost i had to go get that tat'
my potnas are back together
my family's back and better than ever
no problems, women ain't a factor, i already got a girl
that's where i wanna live
wit' my people and a crib
all i gotta do is change my mentality
they woke me up but if i want i'll make these dreams
— reality!

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got the inspiration, the right set up with your family, girl, friends and motivation. No all that's left is the determination and commitment to make your dreams come into existence. But now when you say potnas, you don't mean potnas in crime, or else you'll be back doing time — and we know that's not what you have in mind! As always, thanks for the fine rhymes.

What Made You Give Up?

What made me give up is coming to jail. Bad things I did were fun.

But suffering the consequences is not fun. Running the streets and getting high and being with my friends all night is fun. But coming in the house drunk in front of my momma getting kicked out the house is not fun. Robbing people for their goods is fun. But the guilt of how you messed up their life and situation is not fun. How karma comes back to you three times worst is also not good.

I really decided to give up the game cause I want to live a good life. I want to get money the right way so it want have to get took from me, and so I can get my taxes back. I won't have to look over my shoulder when I'm getting money. I won't have to worry about people robbing me for my goods when I'm working. I won't have to worry about the police jacking me, so these are just some of the reasons that I want to give it up.

-Aleshia Keyz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Aleshia, you're right about consequences not being fun. You may not recognize it, but there is a lesson to be learned in every mistake that we make. The next couple years of your life won't be easy, but you are a much better person recognizing the mistakes that you've made, rather than out in the streets making more. Keep your head up Aleshia, you are becoming a mature young woman and you've got your whole life ahead of you. Peace.

I Failed Myself

I don't think society failed me, I failed myself 'cause I refused to listen. When I should have been in school, I was smoking blunts and kicking it with my folks. So I can only blame myself for that, not the school.

But I can blame the police a little, 'cause they used to harass us whenever they seen us.

One time, a day after Christmas, they stopped us, stomped my new white Forces and dipped me on the concrete when they couldn't find nothin' on us. So after that I was like, "Screw the police! I'm doing whatever I want!" So you could blame them for making me think like that.

I couldn't blame my family, 'cause Moms did what she could. I just was runnin' the streets all day not listening. I could go on and on, but I'm not gonna. So, society didn't fail me — I failed myself. Peace out.

-Rae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate your humility, but now your life is far from over. We've always seen in your someone with a lot of talent, intelligence and creativity, who just needs to harness it and find some direction in life. If it's true that you've failed yourself, then stop it! Now that you know, continue to do what you want — but recognize that you don't want to keep failing yourself.

When Kudah Was Little

When I was little, I was a short, brown-skinned, shy kid. I was looking always for people to form teams with to play sports.

As I got older, I started to look up to the criminals and drug dealers I'd see in the streets. I was admiring how they had the nice fancy cars, big stack of money, and all of the girls. So, I was like, "That's what I want!"

So I grabbed the sack and went to that street, over the waters, and started to do my thang. I had all the older ninjas around the corner mad at me and my ninjas. Then that's when the war came. So we rode it out like America in World War I.

-Kudah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Without a whole lot of words, you tell a clear and, from our point of view, tragic story of how a youngster comes to find himself in a maximum security unit in juvenile hall — having survived the war in the street he grew up to see become his daily reality.

That Dream

I dream I am with my family! In reality, I won't be able to hold them the way I want to hold them, for a long time. When I get to where I am going, I hope my family will come and visit me.

I have memories, too, in my dreams. I dream of that family barbecue — everyone is laughing and capping on one another. Everyone is having fun — no violence or nothing. Loud music is playing. Granny is watching over the kids. Grown folks drinking a lil' alcohol, playing basketball with the big kids. Everyone is having a good time. It feels exactly like yesterday!

As a matter of fact, it feels like I came to jail today! I'm going to be in jail for a long time, and it just makes me want to do more shhh to get time — but I don't because I want to be with my family. I have flashbacks of all the robberies and shady shhh I did to people, and I wish I could turn back and change it all. I do believe that when I get out I'll be different — hopefully better, and I will have changed my ways.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You keep that image of yourself reunited with your family, changing your ways and staying free to be a family man, not only for your own family but for your whole community. Keep that image in your mind and use it to keep yourself in line so you do not catch more time for acting out on the frustration and rage that come with living in a cage surrounded by others who test you everyday. And take whatever opportunities come your way for education and job-training. You might want to go deeper into whatever spiritual tradition you grew up in, or choose a new one and use it to help (re)shape your heart and mind.

From Good Kid to Bad

When I was little I was a good kid. I used to get good grades. I used to always hang around my friends and didn't get in no trouble. I used to play on basketball teams and used to always mess around wit' girls. When I got to the fifth grade I started smoking weed with my cousins, and really started messing around wit' girls.

When I got in the sixth grade I started fighting ninjas and beastin' out.

When I got to the seventh grade I started committing crimes. Never stopped after that, and now I'm 17 and in jail, but when I get out ninjas know what's up. 'Cause I'm from the hood, I feel so good.

I'll get at you Beat.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: Here's a question — when you were happier? You say you "feel good" but we don't believe that for a second. How can you feel good, locked up, getting in trouble, not being able to play basketball, your favorite sport. How did you feel, back when you were a "good kid." Because — shhhh! Don't tell anyone! — we think that good kid is still inside you, wishing you weren't always messing with his dreams and dragging him into trouble.

Dreaming

dreaming that i'm back home
 with my girl and my kids
 i'm in the hood chilling with my ninja
 smoking purple on the block
 that's what i dream about
 being in the hood with my family
 that's what i'm dreaming
 having nightmares
 about being shot in the head
 and about being locked up

-Young Quez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The way you take us into that sweet dream of being home with family and your kids, and then twist us quick into those nightmares of being shot to death, which really would be forever, or locked up, which feels is final as death when you add "forever"! Terrific expressive writing, Young Quez, that makes us feel you.

My Man, My Life

I am a 17 year old girl. I was born in Oakland California reppin the bay 'till I die. I am a prostitute, and all I think about is money. There's only one thing good and different on my part from some other working girls is that I don't have a pimp. I have a baby daddy and yes I do have a baby. My boyfriend watches me and makes sure that nothing bad happens, though I have been robbed, cut and almost killed several times.

My man will always be there for me I have been with him for four and a half years and we have an 8 months old baby boy together. He is named after him and he loves and protects him. Right now my baby is with him and hopefully he is being the best father he could be.

-Tiffany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What's the difference between a boyfriend and a pimp if they are both helping you to sell yourself? We sincerely hope that, for your baby's sake, you take this time to reevaluate your situation! You say you've been hurt and have almost died—what will happen to your child if something like that happens to you? Instead of thinking only about money, we suggest you think about the life you brought into this world and how your own life will affect his. You're young and it's hard, but now what? Stop being selfish!

You Can't Always Get What You Want

Nobody ever wakes up and wants to be in a cell, but what can I say, things happen. You beat your brain down telling yourself how you coulda did, and how you shoulda did, but in all reality nothing matters after it's all said and done.

I would like to go back to my normal life, but you can't always get what you want in life.

The only thing you can do is love what's given to you, accept your consequences and move forward.

Always remember progress, not perfection.

Life is what you make it and only you can live your life.

I say lay in the bed you make, will catch up to you.

I live for today, and in my lifetime it's been crazy, hectic, and dark

but in the dark, eight hours from now the light will shine.

-Laomafmn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of what you say rings true and your outlook is a mature one, but we feel the need to encourage you. You still have plenty of time to make your life something you enjoy living—it will take time and work and won't always seem like you're getting somewhere, but you can get there if you try. Like you said—progress, not perfection.

When I Was Little

When I was little, I was smoking weed

When I was little messed with girls

When I was little I robbed people

When I was little I was fighting other kids

When I was little I got my ass whooped

When I was little I got hit by a car

When I was little I got kicked out of school

And went back to the same school

When I was little people lied to me a lot

When I was little the police beat people up on the street, and that shhh was crazy

When I was little I was hella bad

When I was little we stole hella cars

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And now your grown, or almost grown, and it's up to you to make what you can out of this history you have. Your memories are full of pain and confusion and violence, but they're YOURS, they made you who you are, they gave you the gift of this great poem, maybe they also gave you the strength to write. Not just to write more poems, but to write a future for yourself that YOU Chose. What would that future look like?

Bring back

Sometimes I sit in my room and reminisce

While others I wish and think of what if

I would have did something different

And been more cognizant

Of everything around me

Then I knew I would be home

And not here

But it's cool I ain't tripping

Because it's me they caught slipping

Not paying attention

People around me forgot to mention

Five-Oh was hittin' the corner

So now I'm a lonely mourner

Wishing to be home and full of what ifs

I did this and that

-Y's Lady, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think you're in Juvie because the people around you didn't tell you the police were coming, or do you believe in a bigger reason? Could it be that this is your chance to think about starting a different kind of life?

Dreams

Well one of the dreams I had that I wish wasn't just a dream but that it was real was a couple of days ago. I dreamt that I was out in the streets kicking it with my best home girl, which is like my sister.

We were kicking it and having so much fun; the best time of our lives and then I woke up and saw white walls and realized I was locked up and it was just a dream. I wish it wasn't just a dream because yesterday I was told that my best home girl is leaving the state and not coming back which means I'm never going to see her again.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't be too discouraged. We don't know to which state your friend is moving, but we're sure if it's something you really care about, you can work towards going to visit her. Sometimes seeing a new place can give you a whole new perspective. You should make it your mission to be successful and live a life free of trouble, and by doing so more opportunities will open up.

No Love or No Love

When I was a little kid I used to be hella bad. Everybody on the street knew about me. I used to do hella stuff in my neighborhood and messed up hella shhh around town. When I was stayin' with my grandfather I had messed up about 10,000 dollars worth of stuff and then he used to give me a lot of stuff.

This lady by me had a fruit tree, and we used to go to her house and steal the fruit off the tree, but sometimes she would catch us and come out and yell at us and say you kids don't come back or I will call the police.

When I was little me and my cousin used to sneak in the pool in the park and go swimming and stuff. We used to get caught by the park police and they told us don't do it, but we kept on doing it. When I was little my grandfather had this big ass basement and it had a pool table and more, but then I started messing it up and doing hella shhh and stuff. When I was little they called me Lil' Man Man. They knew me as that because I was bad and shady and more.

-Mo Love or No Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Where were your mother and father when you were running around doing bad things? We've seen enough of your writing, and enough of your personality, to know that even if you do bad things, you're still a good person. The problem is that messing up as an adult isn't about swimming pools and the neighbor's trees, it's about hurting other people and yourself, so it's something you have to change, for the sake of your own self and happiness. How are you going to do that? How are you going to set the good person inside you free from all those crazy actions?

Believe In Me

It's hard to say you're okay,
In the midst of hurt and strife.
You seek and try to preserve,
Through every stage of life.

You wonder what the future holds,
How successful you will be.
But often you fail to tell yourself,
"I believe in me"

You seek to find acceptance,
You conform to their new ways.
You lose hold of all your values,
And slowly drift astray.

Your passion soon becomes,
Something very hard to see.
Again you fail to tell yourself,
"I believe in me"

You search for joy and happiness,
But somehow come up short.
You didn't seek gods will this time,
Or wait for his report.

He wanted you to ask him,
"What is it that I need?"
So simple was the answer,
"Just believe in me!"

-Rucker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice piece! It's so very important to believe in oneself, especially when times are tough, but those are usually the hardest times to think good thoughts about yourself. Good work...

Shine On My Mind

i wake up in the morning
with shine on my mind
trying to figure out
different ways to get money
selling drugs is one thing i do
but it's more than one way
to get money
like going to school or
get that GED

but i never heard of a gangster
with a education or a degree
but i seen people in position
doing things to keep their life
together
but me it's a different story
my life is a difficult position
no one care about me or about my
whereabouts

so i have a don't-care feeling
i am just another person
who try to shine or get money

-Walley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't see gangsters with an education, 'cause once they get it, they have no reason to live that no-win, high-risk, fast rise-and-fall, life style at all. Now they can get a decent job, maybe fall in love for real and raise a family. With no one to guide you, you need to "father" yourself. Tell yourself the good advice someone who cares about you would tell you. Then follow through, and the next generation will look up to you, care about you and love you, too.

It Can't Be Me

When I look at the face
That I hide from every day
The pain in me can't be erased
So hey, what can I say
Words can hurt
They can break a human soul
But what is diamond
That was never coal
What is a dream
Without ambition
A flowing stream
Flowing into an endless ocean
Let me live
Let me live

-Mark B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is such a good poem, Mark. You are alive, very alive, so how will you shine as a diamond tempered by the extreme pressures that have made you? A dream without ambition is just a dream, so what is your ambition — and what is your plan to make your dream a reality?

Giving Up

i gave up on my dream
gave up on my family
gave up on my ninja
gave up on my life
but still playing the game

-Tonga, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Look at what the game is costing you! The price is too high. You're like an addict who won't quit till he dies, so he dies a little more everyday! Thanks for writing a poem that's this strong, straight and true. No disrespect, but you're not playing the game, the game's playing you.

I have to wait another nine months just to get a chance to have a normal life

A Pain in My Heart

Man sometimes I really want to give up, like when things get real tough.

One reason is because I have lost a close friend whose name is Mike, to violence. It has put a real pain in my heart, because when you lose someone it feels like it was meant to make you just feel down and mourn for that person. So that is made me give up.

No, society has not failed me. I have been doing the wrong thing because of wrong decisions, but we all make wrong decisions sometimes. But none of us should have the audacity to say that it is society's fault.

-Casey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you lose someone you care about, it feel like the universe has just punched you in the stomach - because it has. But in life, when we get punched in the stomach, we lie on the floor in pain for a while, and then we have to do something about that punch, right? If violence took your friend, HIT BACK. Not by taking revenge, The Beat does not and will never condone revenge... but hit back at the idea of violence itself. When a teacher takes an interest in his student's lives, he's fighting back. When a doctor works a twenty-four hour shift in the emergency room, she's fighting back. When a politician helps negotiate a peace treaty between two countries at war, he's fighting back. So in honor of your loyalty to your friend Mike, how will you fight back?

A Stupid Choice

My life sucks, but it's ok. There were many times where I wanted to give up. My parents "neglected" me or just chose they didn't want anything to do with me anymore so I had to find other ways to live.

I've been through hell but at least I had food and showers; at least I have a roof over my head for free. Just for the price of the next year of my life.

It's crazy because before I came to juvie I was trying to straighten up but in this world you have to have your parents permission to do that, but they were gone. So I made some stupid choice and found myself here now because I had no choice.

I have to wait another nine months just to get a chance to have a normal life. That's what makes me want to give up. But just think it's either nine long months or three years in CYA and then another year or two in another group home.

I choose the nine months thank you, because when I get free I have a job, home and loving best friend aka boyfriend I plan to have kids with in two to four years. As long as I stay off drugs, out of jail, and keep my job. I can't wait to finish school and be normal so I won't give up. But life's still a witch.

-Newark Call, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so glad that you've decided to stick through the nine months and then try to work your life out. Although there are always going to be times when we feel like giving up, it only leads to more sadness and darkness. Keep your head up and remember your goals and that there is a support out there as long as you ask and do not run! Good luck...

Eight Words

There are eight words in this first line
Stream of consciousness ain't got nothin' but time
I had a dream last night and when I woke up
I had blood on my pillow case; I said, "What the..."
Nosebleeds come when you don't want them to
Like when you're asleep, dreaming of new shoes
I met this girl, and she's really, really cute
She reminds me of an angel, playing a golden flute
She got blonde hair and a gorgeous smile
I just might have to talk about her for a while
Anyway, she is an extremely nice girl
Vegetarian, and she loves the world
I showed her respect and she showed me some, too
It's amazing what being polite to a woman can do
Anyways, my hand is starting to hurt
And my armpits are sticking to the hem of my shirt
Thinking about her ...

I think I'll go to bed and dream of spaghetti

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Thanks for the stream of thought. You cover plenty in a few minutes. We appreciate the ride too. So how was the spaghetti?

she is an extremely nice girl

Vegetarian, and she loves the world

I showed her respect and she showed me some, too

It's amazing what being polite to a woman can do

Music List

When I get out I'm going to buy a blank CD and burn my favorite songs for all time on it. Here's what I got so far:

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young—Guinevere
Paul Simon—Sound of Silence
Tupac—I Ain't Mad At He
Tool—Third Eye
Spoon—The Way We Get By
Rod Stewart—Do You Think I'm Sexy
Pink Floyd—Wish You Were Here
Led Zeppelin—Stairway To Heaven
Police—I'll Be Watching You
Bryan Adams—Everything I Do, I Do It For You
Eminem—Kim
Cradle Of Filth—Her Ghost In The Fog
50 Cent—21 Questions
The Doors—People Are Strange
Marilyn Manson—The Beautiful People
Rob Zombie—Living Dead Girl
Lords Of Acid—Show Me Your Pussy Cat
Johnny Cash—Personal Jesus
Nirvana—Rape Me
Poison—Every Rose Has Its Thorns
Moody Blues—Knights In White Satin
Queen—Bohemian Rhapsody
Jethro Tull—Aqualung

-Dominic

From The Beat: Why don't you write about in what way these albums, or certain cuts of them, move you? Is there any theme that is included in all of them? Have the lives any of these artists moved you to love their music? Have you ever considered writing lyrics to songs? We bet you'd write fabulous lyrics. Why don't you try? Or, tell us your ten CDs/Albums that you would bring on a deserted island. Only ten now, and why?

EEEE

Poetry to me is the easiest thing to read
Just stop and plant the seed and watch the hungry greed
Readers' eyes will plead and veins will cease to bleed
Like a Hawaiian string of beads, I know what they need
If you climb up a tree and go bother a hive of bees
They knock down to the reeds and on berries you will feed
Like Tonto and his steed, they have about eight feet
Shortstops wear cleats, and drummers bang out beats
Crackheads don't like speed; potheads prefer weed
Frightened animals will flee when I throw rocks at the sea
Do you feel the cool Bay breeze; does it make you want to sneeze?

I've seemed to have lost my keys; my Mercedes is green

I don't like green peas or even lima beans

Being a veggie fiend is not always what it seems

So fresh and so clean; my step daddy is mean

He rants and he screams; he throws wooden beams

I'm a join the hockey team and get skinny and lean

The girls will love me like whipped cream; I can't wait, it'll be sweet

My parents want no heat, but they stay on the street

I'm writing to The Beat: It's staff all want to meet me

I once saw a he make love to a she

They moved under the sheets and the mattress creaked

I'm a super freak; I'll make the girlies squeak

I've been locked up for forty-two weeks; I'm tired of staff's speech

When anybody speaks, I dismiss it as weak

My thoughts are slowly creeping; they are really sneaky

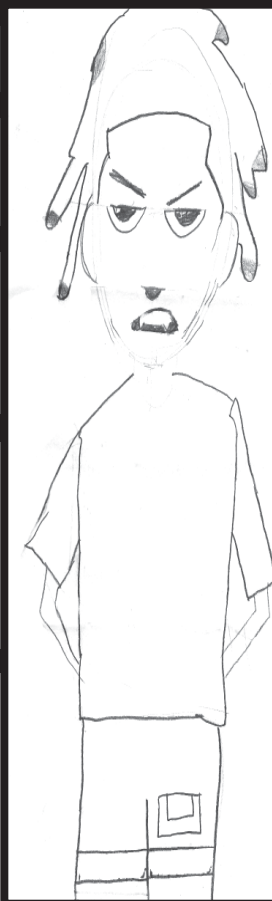
I'm not really sleepy but please don't weep

I don't want to hear a peep, or I just might leap

Off of a high peak, and into a world so bleak

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Another knock out jumble of your free-styling surrealistic impressions, much like some of your drawings. Love the creation.



Vast

We began high above
The nations of the earth
Borrowing a handful of the
Utterly desolate black
We molded it, fashioned it
Into an image, a likeness
Horizontal beams of faith
Serve to sharpen the divide
We are numerous as the
Stars of the sky

-Dominic's Little Brother, Marin

From The Beat: Do you mean that, like the Biblical God, you and whoever created the world out of empty black nothing? Who are you that are as numerous as the stars in the sky? What faith are you alluding to? What divide?

I Am A Common Man

I am a common man of modesty
With the deformity of mediocrity
With this burden, I struggle through
each day

Making unremarkable progress
In a very normal way

-Dominic's Little Brother, Marin

From The Beat: When anyone describes himself as modest, we wonder, but in your case, maybe you are modest and also very self-knowledgeable. You certainly have a dazzling vocabulary and obviously love to express yourself.

Sometime I Cry

sometime i cry
 i hope that i die
 so i can be with my real peoples
 sometime i cry
 hoping that i can fly
 with god and just get real high
 and pray for the peoples that wanted to die
 sometime i cry
 looking at my enemies
 because i know one day someone
 going to make them die
 soon as they ride back
 so all i can say is bye bye
 that why i cry
 so i have to get high
 sometime i cry
 looking at the peoples that get in this game
 and don't know what to bang
 so i think it's time for these peoples to change
 sometime i really cry
 when i think about the peoples i really love
 so i can't want to die
 — mo' love
 or no love

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a powerful and moving poem, so full of real emotion packed into a rhyme that brings your meaning home! But it's not just those who don't know who need to change, it's also those so deep they can't even imagine change in their sleep. When you can't go on like you're doing, and you can't imagine change, it's time to stop everything and dedicate yourself to do-right just for today. And every morning you awake, tell yourself, "Just for today, with love in my heart, I'll follow the right way." Miraculously, it changes how you feel, little by little, so you stop feeling stuck in the middle.

The Dream of My Life

It's morning time and the sun is shinin'...
 I'm writing in my journal feelin' lonely and depressed,
 my brothers called my name.
 I was surprised because last night he wasn't there.
 But I was happy he was now.
 All my other siblings were there as well.
 All I could feel was happiness and love.
 Then to bring the life out of me I saw my mom.
 I ran up to her and gave her a hug.
 It felt real.
 I felt love.
 I felt home.
 We were together,
 a family again.
 I felt cold and then everything faded away.
 It was my dream.
 I was alone.
 I miss you mom.
 Release date Kecia 9-24-2014.
 don't let that moment slip away

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like one of those dreams you wish would never end—one that makes you sad to wake up and feel your reality. We're sorry you aren't with your family and believe that one day you can be. Good luck, make it your mission to get back home!

From Maximum Security

Hey, this is Lil' Choyce. I guess I am back up in Juvenile Hall. This time I am back for something I don't even know about! You feel me? They talking about A.M. (attempted murder)!

It don't really matter what they talking about — only God can judge me now, because I'm putting my life on the line for nothing. Trying to give me ten years! I didn't do it, so why they want to to take ten years? So I just hold my head up like a big dog and say screw all them that going against me!

I got to do what we have to do. If that means I do one year, I do that. If it means I do one hundred years, that what it is.

RIP Mama, love you!

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is tough indeed to find yourself locked up for something you know nothing about. Should we remind you that if you keep playing with fire, one day you're going to get burned? If you're out in a year, get up out the life that put you here. Don't keep putting your freedom at risk like this. Meanwhile, stay strong.

I THINK I LIKE you

*I Gave Up*

Damn, I'm back in jail. Let me tell you all, my last visit in juvenile hall was in January 2006, seven months ago.

When I got out in January I thought I was on top of my game. I went to a group-home in Hayward. I felt good because the time I was there I was doin' what I was suppose to do.

I didn't have any contact with my family besides on the phone and that made it hard. I started writing my mom again and that made me feel good; two months after I wrote her I asked my home if I received any mail and they told me no!

The same night they gave me mail from the previous months that my mother wrote. We had a meeting about everything and so I thought the problem was over. Five months later(during those five months)I asked again. I couldn't take all the stress of being separated from my mom so I gave up. Now I'm back here damn!

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard to be away from our loved ones, but the sad thing is that you only prolonged the separation from your mom. It's hard to remember the big picture when you're in the situation, but our advice is to complete your program so that you can move on once it's over.

Trying to give me ten years! I didn't do it,
 so why they want to to take ten years?

Better Off

I miss your face
Your sweet embrace
Your loving touch
I miss you so much
The whispers you spoke into my ear

Now that you're gone
It just ain't fair
When I think of you
I get so confused
Your love for me was once so strong

It was doomed to end all along
I miss when you'd call just to say hi

Now you're too busy getting high
A year and a half I'll put to the past

You thought I cheated on you
That's the last thing I'd do
Now every time when we talk
And look into each other's eyes
I can see our love once again

Trying to rise
Should I allow this love to start again?

I don't know if I can handle you
Breaking my heart again
Maybe we'll be better off just being friends

Love to my friend

-Lil' Sniffles

From The Beat: We're sorry you've had this sad experience with love, but it's one that everyone of a certain age recognizes. Love is hardly ever smooth — and boys, in particular, will often say "I love you" without much thought behind it. We don't know if you should "start again" with him, either, but once burned, twice careful!

I Feel Sad

I feel sad because all the things I heard. I'm not getting out on my court date. I was supposed to. My PO came and gave a lot of bad news. My dad went back to jail after he spent three years there. It felt like it was about 25 years. I hate to lose my dad again. He was doing good. I think that it's all my fault.

Now they trying to charge me with something that I didn't do. I'm so stressed out in here, I look down all the time. Five-minute showers! But I'm doing really good, not trying to be bad. I'm trying to keep my head up for my family. I just wish I could go home and have one more chance.

-Nique

From The Beat: If you got to go home for "one more chance," how would you use it? Have you had other chances before? Why didn't you take advantage of them? Why did you come back (or is this your first time)? One thing we know for certain: despite all the pain you feel for your father returning to prison, it is not your fault! Whatever bad choices he made are his responsibility, just as whatever bad choices you make are yours. We hope you get that chance you want so that you can start making good choices.

Funerals

I've been to one too many funerals, and they all really hurt me. My aunt just passed not too long ago. It seems like all my loved ones leave. Go first. I really wish my grandmother could come back. I lost her six year ago from cancer. That really hurt me. My mom's boyfriend was killed last year. Then my cousin got killed from being with someone at the wrong time. She left two kids behind.

-Nique

From The Beat: Every death is tragic for those loved ones left behind. But it is completely natural for the older members of your family (older than you) to go before you. That's why the violence on the streets that took your cousin is so very unnatural — the young should not have to be buried by the old!

A Beat Within

I'm living in the city
Under the shadow of death
Looking at everybody
As if about to take their last breath
These are the things I don't want to be
I wish people out there can just see

It ain't easy livin' in the city
A dime a day that's a hustle for me
As I spark a blunt and take a hit off this weed
Should've went to school and made something of me

Man it ain't easy livin' in the city
This city is full of temptations and greed
On a daily hustle to survive and eat
Can't go home 'cause I'm tired of seeing moms get beat

Not by a muscle but by the liquid she likes to drink

My life flies by every time I blink
Sometime I just don't know what to think
So I'm just going to open a new door
I'm going in like a lion so everybody hears my roar
There ain't gone be no more holdups at the liquor store

'Cause I'm going to rise up and overcome all this lil' bull shhh

Best believe I'm done 'cause only I know
What's going to be the true outcome

-Ghost Face Poet

From The Beat: We do believe you. There are some things that no child should have to do, and the fact that you had to choose the streets over your alcoholic mother is one of those things. It is a personal tragedy for you and your mother and family, and it is a social tragedy for everyone who lives in this city, or any city. Yes, we believe you are done with liquor store holdups; in fact, we think you're done with anything that's going to hold you up from achieving that "true outcome."

My Hour Glass

Looking through my hourglass
My decision to dull my mind
As it disappears inside it
Along goes my time

I'll come, I'll go
I'll do as I please
As I'm about to go
Friends beg on their knees

They scream, cry, and plead with me
They say I don't understand
By being truly "my loves" that care
They reach out a helping hand

Over time we courted
Days nothing in my hands
Successful in progression
My mind formed plans

My words don't measure to my addiction
Regardless of how strong they sound
Until one day, heard a voice
So cunning, so swiftly profound

So with these new found friendships
I'll better myself throughout my life
So besides all female friendships
Hopefully will become my mav's wife

-Angie

From The Beat: There is much in this poem we don't fully understand — and wish that you would write the story that explains it. Are you saying that your drug addiction was everything to you until someone said something that registered with you and changed you profoundly? Or are we totally off the mark? What was it you heard that was so "swiftly profound?" Who (or what?) are these "new found friendships?" And who is mav, and who hopes to become his (her?) wife?

The Casket

I got a lot of homies what died when they were young.

When I found this out I was shocked and stunned.
I was in here so I couldn't put flowers on their graves.

Sittin' in my room alone, their company I crave.
Can't smoke or party wit' you no more.

And can't ride in ya scraper or buy liquor at a store.

We were homeboys till the day that we die.

Never thought you'd be the first. I said good-bye.

Now I sit in my room planning on what to do.
I'm gonna visit your grave, that's the first thing I'm gonna do.

RIP homeboys.

-Chipmunk

From The Beat: What a sad and tragic poem! You have our sympathy for the loss of your homeboy, and our curiosity about whether this terrible reality has caused you to want to make any changes in your life?

Where I'm Headed

Hell is where I'm headed

I might as well make friends with the devil
And like a bomb, I'll be gone when the smoke settles.

I don't know what to do. Ain't got nowhere to go.

The only thing that I can think of is go back to slangin' dope.

This is San Mateo County where they lock up little kids.

Ain't got nothin' to run to when it's time to handle biz.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Well, tragically, we don't know where you're headed either. We enjoyed having you come to The Beat office, but then you disappeared... We sure hope you haven't gone back to your old ways, because the next stop in the criminal justice system won't be as easy as this one — and this one wasn't all that easy! You say you don't know where to go, but you knew you could come here, and you made your own choices not to.

Who Would You Call?

If I had anybody's phone number, I would call the bail bonds because being without your family and peers it's hard. Life is too short. I don't want to waste my time here, even though I have two months here, but two months on EMP. I feel locked down, but anyways, it's tough and I plan on not coming in here or get in trouble with the authorities. I never expected to come here because like I said, I didn't want to waste my time in here.

-Arik

From The Beat: We can sure understand why you would feel like coming to this place is a waste of your time, and that you could be doing something much more productive. But we can't quite understand why you'd also waste a phone call on a bail bonds person, since you are not entitled to bail anyway! (And we hope you don't commit an adult crime that will entitle you to bail... best to stay out of the system from here on out.)

Dialing Six Six Six

I know it sounds real morbid and all, but wouldn't it be cool to talk to Satan? I'm agnostic (that means I don't believe in religion), but if there really is a Prince of Darkness down there, then I'd have a lot of questions to ask him. Like, exactly, why does he tempt us to do "evil" things? Does he enjoy it? How does he know when to label something as good or evil? Who is the judge of that? God?

Well, what position is he in to say what's good or evil? Did he create good and evil? Or did God create good, and Satan create evil? Can the devil create things? And if God can do anything, why doesn't he stop Satan from doing things? Couldn't he do that? And you've got to wonder about them Satanist people. Does Satan like them better? Will he treat them better in Hell? What is Hell like? What does the Devil look like? If I talked to Satan, I'd give him the most killer phone bill ever.

-The Scientist

From The Beat: We love this piece for the depth of your imaginings — for probing your own brain and thoughts. We think every one of your questions is worth asking, although we, of course, don't have a single answer! But we do have one question of interest to us: With just one phone call to make, why pick the Devil when you could have phoned God Who could provide you with all the same answers (one of the definitions of God is omniscience — all knowing), plus a lot more. The truth is, we'd be more interested in God's answers to your profound questions than the Devil's (whom we don't really trust much anyway...).

What Makes a Man

Ever since day one
I wanted to be a man
So they took my baby bottle away
And put a gun in my hand
Then they told me murder would
make me a man
I know this sounds crazy
But you got to understand
That the road you're headin'
And the life you're livin'
The pen is where you're going to
land

-John

From The Beat: Up until a certain age (measured in maturity more than years), we are what we are taught: we grow up imitating those closest to us, and we become smaller versions of those larger family members we imitate. But then we begin trusting our own maturing judgments more and more, and to question some of the lessons we learned as babies. You are maturing into a thoughtful and self-analytical man, and it is a privilege to watch the unfolding of the man you are becoming. Just keep moving in the direction your mind is already leading you, despite the many obstacles you will inevitably have to overcome as you move forward, and there's no telling what you are capable of thinking — and being.

My Selfish Tears

My tears touched her cheek
Laying there in utter peace
An angel to everyone
Her life had just begun
I shed my tears selfishly
Because God took her from me
How will I get through the day
Without seeing her innocent face
She was only twelve
I guess God wanted her for Himself
I can't blame Him though
I shed a tear
Because if anyone I know
Deserved life it was her
She was kind, honest, pure
I would take her place
A life for a life
She looks like she's thinking
Of all of the lives she's touched
With a slight smile on her face
She's dreaming I tell myself
She's gonna wake up
I know I'm lying
I know she's gone
Inside I'm dying
I kiss her on her forehead
I might as well be dead
RIP Shamika

-King

From The Beat: Wow, King, we hope you had the opportunity to speak these thoughts at Shamika's funeral because you truly made us cry. By the end of this very fine poetic tribute, we feel like we know Shamika, too, and we feel the pain of her loss. We also love that you describe your tears as selfish, since we interpret that to mean that Shamika is now with God.

Her Funeral

I remember that one day when I heard the news — when I told myself no, it can't be true. I remember seeing her two days before it happened. We was supposed to kick it dat day, 'cause the Friday was crackin'.

But when her cousin told me da info, my body went cold. I couldn't believe that a 16-year-old's life had been stoled. But the day I die I will meet her once again. I will see her on the other side, a long lost friend.

-Victor

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this painful memory with The Beat. We read about so many deaths in these pages, it's important to remember how shocking every death is to those who love and are left behind. Yes, you will meet your friend again — but don't do anything to make that reunion happen sooner than natural life has planned for us all.

How I See It

You see, everyone thinks about and hopes to get off probation. But how I see it, it doesn't mean shhh if you get off probation. Just because you don't have a PO or a judge to check up on you doesn't mean you can't get in trouble. Remember, you got caught once. You can get caught twice!

When you get off probation and don't change your ways, you'll most likely get caught, but the difference is there's no more juvy. It's now escalated to county! Then you have a record. People think county is official but it ain't. You see, when you get brought to juvy, you're supposed to learn your lesson there, stop your habits. But people take juvy as a joke, "It's nothin'."

Juvy is our chance, kind of like a life-saver. It takes us out of the streets, changes our schedule and we hear positive speeches. Me, I never had someone on the outs talking positively to me. In here, that's all my ears hear. It's so great! Now that I'm ready to change, and have heard all this positive advice and compliments, I have the tools to go out and do good. That's how I see it.

-Gypsyie

From The Beat: It's terrible that you never had anyone on the outs giving you positive messages. At the same time, it's wonderful that you are now hearing that feedback that you missed in your younger days. Yes, these are tools for making your life better, like finishing school and respecting your parents. Oh yes, and wanting to have a better life by your willingness to use these tools to your own advantage.

A Mis Nietos

Lo principal que le quisiera decir a mis nietos es que siempre respeten a la gente, que nunca se vayan por el mal camino, que siempre piensen en sus padres, sus antepasados, nunca hagan drogas porque es malo para ellos y su salud, que siempre piensen las cosas dos veces antes de hacerlas. Nunca piensen en engañar al gobierno, en faltarle el respeto o hechar mentiras. Que nunca traten mal a sus esposas, que siempre la traten como si fuera un petalo de flor. Decirles que piensen en ser alguien en la vida, que sean dueño de un negocio o un maestro o algo para que nunca los vean de meno en la vida.

Espero conocerte en el futuro. Esepro vivir muchos años para conocer mis nietos, estar con mi esposa y conocer el futuro que la vida nos va a dar en el mundo. Tambien por mi mismo, ser alguien en la vida, tener una casa propia y nunca jamás pagar renta ni hacer ricos a otras personas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que ellos lleguen a seguir tus consejos, porque creemos que una gran parte de los jovenes que andan en malos caminos se han desguiado por falta de guía, de información y soporte. Estamos seguro que seras un buen abuelo y que cuidaras mucho de tus seres queridos. ¿Pero como piensas llegar a tener este tipo de vida si no vas por el buen camino? ¿Te servira esta experiencia para cambiar toda tu vida a mejor? Acuerdate que para que nuestros futuros hijos sean alguien en la vida, alguien tiene que dar el ejemplo. ¿Seras tú?

To My Grandchildren

The main thing that I would like to tell my grandchildren is to always respect people, never go down the wrong path, always think about your parents, their ancestors, never do drugs because it is bad for them and their health, and to always think twice about things before doing them. Never think about deceiving the government, or disrespecting or lying to them. I'll tell them to never mistreat their wives and to always treat them as if they were a flower petal. Tell them to think about being someone in life, be owners of some kind of business or a teacher or something so they are never looked as anything less in life.

I hope to get to know you in the future. I hope to live many years so I can get to know my grandchildren, be with my wife, and get to know the future that life is going to give us in the world. Also, for myself, be someone in life, have my own life, and never again pay rent nor make other people rich.

-Juan

From The Beat: We hope that they end up following your words of advice because we believe that a huge majority of the youth who are in bad paths have strayed due to lack of guidance, information, and support. We are sure that you will be a good grandfather and that you will take good care of your loved ones. But how do you think you'll have this kind of life if you're not going down the right path? Will this experience serve you to change your whole life for the better? Remember that for our future children to be someone in life, someone has to give them the example. Will it be you?

Hi There Beat!

I think my smile is my invisible tattoo because no matter what happens to me, good or bad, I still smile! People who don't know me think I had a great life because I'm always laughing, telling jokes, and thinking I don't have no problems because that's how I want them to think about me, a positive sistah! Feel me? But deep down inside me I hide what upsets me because I feel like if they really knew things that hurt me they'll probably feel bad in front of you but behind you (I'm referring to me) they don't really give a damn, and also really they don't really help me because they got their problems too!

I think I'm a really strong person. I remember when I had Bible study I memorized the quote "even in laughter the heart may be in pain." I think it's better to keep things inside than telling people because some could hella be messy and talk shhh about you behind your back and make the situation you're in worse! What do you think is your invisible tattoo?

-Unknown

From The Beat: Like everyone, we also have invisible tattoos, but we're intrigued by your description of your smile as camouflage. Has this strategy helped you get through difficulties? Do you ever just lose it and break down crying? How will you use your positivity to move farther and farther from this reality?

A Conversation

(Brownie (B) And Miss Grumpy (MG))

B: G-voles Grumpy? G-onda con tigo?

MG: Nada, jus' chillin' like a villain.

B: That's coo'. W'en you gonna get out?

MG: Chales I don't know. How 'bout you?

B: Don't know. My PO try'n' to mess me over 'cause I left the state. Ain't that somethin'!

MG: Damn Dawg, she tryna play you. That ain't even coo'.

B: I know Dawg, but w'at can I say? All I can do is "smile now, cry later," que no?

MG: Simon

B: You know one thing girl?

MG: What jaina?

B: I miss my vato. I don't even know if we still go out. It's been a month since I last wrote him. He might be mad pero ya que (what can I do?).

MG: Well don't trip Brownie. You still hella young. You only fifteen years of age an' I know for a fact that vatos come an' go, so you still got a good chance.

B: Lol. You funny, but that's true homegirl.

MG: It's good that I made you laugh, but like you had said, "Smile now, cry later."

B: Look ruca, I'm runnin' out of time, so I'ma have to let you go wit' these last words. Alrato.

MG: Orale pues, alrato Brownie.

-Miss Grumpy & Brownie

From The Beat: It's cool to have fun with pieces in The Beat, but it's also important to be serious sometimes. This is just a lot of words that aren't very meaningful. Your PO is playing you, Brownie, because you left the state when you weren't supposed to. (Which means that when the PO tells this story, s/he says, "My parolee is playing me by leaving the state without permission..."). Miss Grumpy is giving you advice about waiting for the next vato to come along. This is more interesting to the two of you than to the rest of The Beat readers. Nothing wrong with it, but nothing much to teach or enlighten or get below the surface, either. We're looking for more.

Juvenile Corrupted Me

My life changed when I started getting locked up. It's like the more I kept coming here the more new things I learned. I got so corrupt here. I mean I grew up around gangs and violence, but the more I came here I started learning things about the gang life, my mentality started changing.

I also started meeting other homeboys from Redwood City who showed no pity. That influenced me a lot. People who didn't care. They're down to die for their 'hood no matter the circumstances and if someone was an obstacle for some of those homeboys, they were ready to pull the trigger. I'm out.

-Corrupt

From The Beat: It's one of the worst ironies of the criminal "justice" system that we put violators altogether so that the sophisticated "criminals" end up teaching younger people, like you, what they hadn't thought to do until they got locked up! But even if Hillcrest made you more criminally sophisticated, that doesn't let you off the hook for making decisions that keep you out of places like this. Yes, we also know people ready to die for their 'hoods (and many who have already done so), but we've never understood what the 'hood does for them in return. What you didn't tell us in this piece is whether or not you're following those that corrupted you here, or whether you've decided instead to be a leader — and to lead yourself out of here and out of the life that led you here. We can only hope...

Homie

Damn, Homie, it's been a year since you've been gone and here I am reminiscing 'bout the firme times we shared. We called you "Mr. Magic" porque you got shot up in the head, hands, back and legs and survived it all. I remember you had just gotten out of the hospital and we went to pick you up para kikiarla. You was working at a church, trying to get hope in you. Damn, te extrano.

I remember "Shorty" hella liked you but she already had her vato. I remember you used to talk shhh to me 'cause I was from Redwood and you from Oakland! Always representing your barrio. Now you gone and we miss you. Te extranamos. RIP, June 11, 2005. Magic.

-Morenita

From The Beat: Always representing his barrio until that representation led to his death! And now what is he representing? Damn, pieces like this make both terribly sad and very frustrated because we don't see you taking some important lessons from this experience — including the fact that the street, the barrio, the 'hood don't much care about you no matter how much you care about them. When you're gone, you're gone for good, and that to us is a terrible tragedy. We're sorry you lost Mr. Magic (who, having been shot in the head, hands, back and legs, apparently never got the message into his head...), and all we can do is hope that you understand the gift of life cannot be exchanged for another...

Scarred

My heart was scarred by her

The one I call mother

She always lets me down

Was never around

Always dressed up

Going to clubs

Leaving me with crack head cousins

Tryin' to be something she wasn't

We could barely get by

But she stayed getting high

She couldn't even see

She had kids in need

My heart was scarred by him

My supposed father

Steady on that paper trail

In and out of jail

He failed in life, in mine

He ran out of time to reconcile

Because my heart he defiled

My heart was scarred

By him

Him and him

Ninjas that came in and of my life

With different intentions from

mine

Pretending to be

A dream that I conceived

A perfect man

With a perfect plan

To use

Abuse

And break

Got too close

And hurt me the most

Used me in some way

The last of my life was given in vain

My heart was scarred mostly

Because of he

And that last person is me

-King

From The Beat: The drawing you submitted along with this piece — a heart torn in many places and patched with Band-Aids — is a perfect companion to this perfect poem. Of course, the subject matter is not at all perfect, but the way you tell us your very sad story is. When children are hurt in the ways you have been hurt, it's almost a foregone conclusion that as they grow into adulthood, they will continue hurting themselves. This is partly because of the poor role modeling, but also because children begin to internalize the messages they get from their parents, which too often leads them to conclude they deserved to be abused and hurt, that they are somehow "bad." All we can tell you is that what you have described is the worst betrayal a child has to live with, the betrayal by parents whose job it is to care for those they bring into the world. Your poem tells us that you are blessed with a superior mind that you can use to help heal your bruised and hurting soul. What you don't want to do, King, is to have children of your own and to carry on the "traditions" you've learned at home. We hope you can employ your excellent mind to move past these traumas, not just for your own sake and future, but for that of your future kids.

Love And Pain

Love can be a great thing. It gives you a good feeling and positive temptation. But pain is always in love no matter how hard you try to stop it. How can you heal pain without love? Love is the strongest thing you can feel.

My mind and my heart are set on one guy. And that guy messed his whole life up. He's in jail and I'm in here. We have to survive without each other. I know it hurts and he's hurting too. But we have to make it through. After all of this is over, I'm going to keep my regrets faithful.

As I sit in my cell, with my roommate, we reminisce on all the good times we had with our men. I'm keeping my mind in a mature matter to set myself on a higher level. Love and pain is so strong but when you get through enough of both, you can get through anything else that matters.

-Terra

From The Beat: What do you mean you're going to keep your regrets faithful? We agree with you that love comes with pain, but it comes with much, much more than that, which is why we keep falling into it! We hope that in addition to reminiscing about the past, you'll put some thought into your future, and how to stay free.

The Most Horrible Experience

My life changed after the most horrible experience of my whole life. It was when I was in a car with my friends, trying to be cool by doing things like gas breaking and dipping and scraping. But when we was doing that we were in the wrong place, which was on a freeway with no rails that will stop you from going off the freeway. Well, while we were all in the car all five didn't have seatbelts or anything.

The driver, who was my friend, was playing with the car, trying to do tricks and blasting the music without paying attention. I really didn't know what was going on because I just woke up. But right after a few minutes after I woke up all I seen was the car bumping back and forth in between two cars. It felt so painful, bumping back and forth. I thought we were eventually going to stop, but instead of stopping on the freeway the car ran off the freeway down a hill so it was all bad.

We flipped over twice and landed upside down because the tree had stopped us. But when we stopped, all of us was barely alive. It hurt me so much when the police and the doctor told me I could have been laying in my grave at that moment and I had died for two seconds but was lucky to come back alive. They told me they had never seen some young kids like us survive a car accident like that and that we were the luckiest kids to be alive right now.

After that my whole life changed and now I'm sort of scared of cars because it only happened two to three months ago.

-Monie

From The Beat: We have so many questions about this experience, Monie. First, why would you put yourself in a car on the freeway doing stunts that could have left you dead — and not wear a seatbelt? To us, that's like a group of children getting together to play with guns, not ever considering the consequences. And second, do you feel you have any responsibility to all those innocent other drivers just trying to get from point A to point B while y'all are acting the fools and putting those people's lives at risk too? Consider what might have happened. Of course, you could have ended up dead or permanently paralyzed and dependent on others to feed you, wipe you, bathe you, etc. At the same time, you might have been responsible for killing or crippling someone else. If that someone else had been a baby, how would you feel now? So okay, now you're afraid of cars, but are you as reckless with other areas of your life? Do you smoke cigarettes? Use alcohol? Take drugs? Have unprotected sex? All these things go along with driving recklessly and not wearing a seatbelt.

... when I stepped into the Admissions Office, I told myself, "Man, this here is what they do to animals!"

I Had to Change

Once I had my heart broken and I didn't want it to happen again. I was really hurt. I cried for days. My mom left me for dead. She didn't want me anymore because I kept messing up. I would always promise that I would get better and I only got worse. Not going to school, smoking that purple, trying to be Miss Bad Ass... and it only got me locked up, away five years on probation. Can't go outside, two felonies, can't get a good job like I planned.

When I got locked up the last time it made me think. Them white walls, bed as hard as a rock. Why am I here again? I don't like it here. So I just sat back and thought about my life. Is this the road I want to take? Be here for days and months, not finishing school, be a dumb ass as a young teen?

Or do I want to be the smart, strong, intelligent girl that I am? So I had to change...

-Nique

From The Beat: We don't what mysterious process takes place in some young people (but not in others) that lets them see the connections leading to here — and then realize that they can determine where those connections leading from here. Yes, you are a smart, strong, intelligent girl, and there is little that you can't accomplish. You know what you don't want to be, but have you thought about what you do want to be? We hope that school is your first order of business, because you belong in college!

My Wake-Up

My life changed when the metal handcuffs slapped on. I felt like, "Wow, this is real life." And when I stepped into the Admissions Office, I told myself, "Man, this here is what they do to animals!"

They made me take off my clothes and put on some raggedy drawe's. I didn't blame the staff workers. I mean hey, it's their job. Ain't I right? They took me to A-Unit and the staff worker asked me if this was my first time. I replied, "Yes." He said there's a first time for everything. I remained silent and took it straight down to room sixteen. I made my bed and laid there thinking and thinking like, "Damn, this ain't nothing nice."

I prayed to God that I'll be out of this place soon. Everybody deserves a second chance. I realized that this wasn't the life for me at all. And every day I tell myself I'm going to do positive things when I get out. Not just for me, but for my family.

-Salvador

From The Beat: You know what makes this piece different from so many we get? It's that when they locked you in your room for the very first time, you laid there thinking, and thinking. And we can tell that you are still thinking. We wish you didn't have to come here, but it's clear to us that coming here was like a needed bucket of ice water to the face. Now you're fully awake, so don't go back to sleep when you get back out there. Remember everything you thought about, and make the changes you know you need to make. This is a terrific piece. Thank you for writing it.

Love Is Pain

I have so many invisible tattoos, but one of the invisible tattoos is so big that I can't even carry it inside of me. I feel so sad because that invisible tattoo don't let go of my heart. I always sit and cry. I feel like if blood is dripping from my heart. I have so much pain inside of me.

I just can't even write these words. It's so hard to think of all the memories I shared with that person. It's just hard for me to go on. I even think I can't go on in life. It's just an invisible tattoo I will always carry inside my heart.

All I got to say is I will never forget those times we shared and when you will whisper such sweet words in my ear that now turned into plain dust. But I will never forget. Love is pain. Always,

-Tiny

From The Beat: We're sorry you have to carry the pain of lost love around with you, Tiny. And even though we agree with your title that love is pain, you could have written a very different piece titled "Love Is Great." Because that's the nature of love, it carries us to the mountain tops and it casts us into the valleys. Don't give up on love because of this bitter experience. There are better days ahead!

No Outward Sign

I have at least one or two scars or tattoos that are visible to the world. But all of us have many, many more that are invisible, things that have hurt us or impressed us enough to leave a mark on us internally but that don't leave any outward sign.

-Marco

From the Beat: We would love for you to share a few examples of the invisible scars you have been marked by.

Invisible Tattoos

Before I was born my dad ran out on my mom. He would see me when I was a baby, but he was never there to support me. Since I didn't have a father figure in my life I turned to the streets for love. I was raised by all my homeboys. They treated me like their sister. I was taught by them that females are messy so I grew up hating females. To this day I still have problems with females. I get along with one female who is my cousin/best friend. Me and her have been there for each other through thick and thin.

Another one of my invisible tattoos is when I was in the 7th grade. My boyfriend used to beat me every day. He was very controlling over what I did and who I talked to. It got to the point where I couldn't even talk to my best friend anymore. I wanted to tell my homeboys so bad what he was doing to me but I was afraid of what they might do if I did, so I kept my mouth shut. It went on for a year and six months.

Finally he broke up with me. He didn't give a reason why, but I was happy he did. I remember when I was crying tears of joy. One of my homeboys came up to me trying to comfort me 'cause he thought I was sad. When he looked into my eyes, he said I have the prettiest brown eyes he has ever seen. That is how I got my nick name "Brown Eyes." It made me happy and sad because a few days later he was shot and he died. That is another tattoo of mine. But from that day on I had people call me "Brown Eyes" so that way he would never be forgotten.

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: You've had to experience some pretty rough things for someone your age. We're very sorry about the killing of the boy you'll never forget because he gave you your nickname. But we also are sorry that you allowed another boy to beat on you. We say "boy" because we could never call a male who hits women a "man." Unfortunately, some boys are raised by the adult males in their lives (also boys) to believe that females are of less value than they are, or that it is their right as "men" to treat girls or women any way they choose. We hope you never again allow some boy try to prove that he is a "man" be hitting you. Never again!

RIP

First off, I wanna say rest in peace to all that died by the gun. To my best friend, my big brother James. I miss you, every day. I think about you and I pray that you watch over me and guide me in the right direction. I'ma continue to rep ya name, bes' believe, I love you.

To my lil' homie, Tu Tu. Baby boy you didn't deserve to go out like you did. Damn dog, you will always be remembered. Come on dog, you still got females runnin' around reppin' ya name.

To my big Jason. I love you man. You never let nobody mess wit' me and you put me up on game, but you never let me slang and I love you for that.

To my blood cousin, my boy Nate. Damn, dog, why you let that female get you caught up like that? I promise I'm gonna look after Auntie Steph for you. Damn man, she all messed up about you gettin' killed man. But don't worry. I'ma look after her and ya lil' brothers. And y'all watch over me. I know y'all in good hands now. Rest in peace.

-Young Royal
From The Beat: We can't imagine losing so many of our close friends to gunplay, Young Royal, but at the same time, we can't imagine responding as you have either. We wonder if your friends had died of AIDS or cancer if you would be content to "rep their names." That's just not enough. We think you not only have an obligation to those who are gone, but an even bigger obligation to those who remain — including yourself! If each of your fallen comrades came to you in your sleep and urged you to give up the game, to go to school, to rep your own future and not your past, would you follow their advice? We understand the emotion you must feel when you contemplate all these premature deaths, but we want to know how you will be the role model for success for those coming up behind you.

Because Of A Color

So what's up? It's me, Dumbo.. My whole life been a trip. I seen one of my homies die in front of my eyes. I been through so much pain. Life is so short and it all happened 'cause of a color. My homie Frisco is the one that died. He had a baby. So stay up and watch your back all the time. I'm out.

RIP homies and homegirls.

-Dumbo
From The Beat: Yes, life is so short, even for those who live well into old age. It seems so unnecessary to cause a human life to end prematurely — over "causes" like flags and streets and colors — leaving nothing but the tears of the living.

Jail Is A Habit

Started bargin' on the window
Whore ridin' all night
Next day came
A lot of fights
Most people want to get out
What you goin' on about
Jail is a habit
Can't stop
It's like a drug
On the corner smokin' a nug
Cops pull me over
They hasslin' me like a mug

-Bam Bam
From The Beat: Yes, jail is a habit, but like all habits, you can indeed stop. If you can't stop, you are not the master of your own life, but a follower of someone else's life. Like all habits, the jail habit can be broken. It requires a clear determination to stop doing the things that bring you to jail, and to keep that determination in front of you at all times. If you're a cigarette smoker, it's real hard to quit at first. But each day without a cancer stick makes the next day that much easier. Cops hassle you if you give them a reason to. Why not make their lives miserable by doing good and giving them no excuse to hassle you at all?

Funerals

I've been to a lot of funerals — 18 years of living. Mike 18, Sharod 14, Wayne 17, Raymond 18, Jermaine 18, Big D 25, Shinnny Moe 21, Keese 20, Big Chris 26, and last but not least, big homie LT 30. All died by gunshots.

It was just as hard for me to go to the tenth funeral as it was the first one because these people that I just named were some of the ones that were close to me and meant everything to me. Now that my close homies are gone, I don't even cry no mo', nor look to the sky. I have no feelings.
RIP y'all. I'll never forget you.

-De-Nyee
From The Beat: This is an ongoing tragedy — and one that we know would be addressed in a serious way if it were happening to the middle and upper class and not to the poorest among us! This makes us ashamed! We wonder how you deal with so much death without simply giving up. But we can tell from this poem that you haven't given up and that, despite your words, you do still have very passionate feelings! What is this street army delivering, other than death and tears? Are you doing anything to change this picture, to reduce the terrible effects of this epidemic disease that is wiping out an entire generation? Of course you will never forget your friends, and that's a good thing. But in addition to remembering, what else are you doing to make their lives (and their deaths) count for something?

Change in Lifestyles?

The things I've seen in my life
Is gang banging, fighting, music making and drugs
Pulling out knives and guns
I always thought it was fun
Until I realized that it got me in the halls
To be honest, I still love this game
But the love of the game will keep me in chains
I refused to remain in these clothes that are plain
But when I get out I can't keep doing the same
If you feel me on this just say CHAD-DID-I-MEAN!!

-Justin
From The Beat: All right, then, CHAD-DID-I-MEAN!! We want to say again, Justin, that your awareness that the life you've been leading can only end with more and more time under the control of strangers is half of the equation. The second half is how to get where you want to go from where you are. Sit down and make a plan. What do you want to accomplish first? Go back to school? Who do you need to talk to, if anyone? Get a job? Who can you ask about what exists for people your age, or even for those on probation? Deal with addictions? Who has a list of medical resources available to you? This may seem like hard work to you, but we promise it will pay off huge dividends.

You Had Me

Boy, you had me sprung
Goin' stupid and dumb
Took the wrap for you
'Cause that's what a good chick do
Stayin' by your side baby

-Valerie
From The Beat: Your skills as a writer/poet are most impressive. Your skills as a thinker and doer are most unimpressive and that's why we cut a big chunk of your piece! All the boasting and threatening in this piece comes off as a childish rant in the sense that it ignores your current reality. Even if you were able to "but out this facility," where would that get you? This place is not what's locking you up; it's your mindset that's doing that. And unless you really put your fine mind to work to benefit your life instead of being just one more follower spouting words we've heard so many hundreds of times before, you'll find yourself writing angry, challenging poems from other lock-ups they have waiting for you down the road.

Alone In This World

I love you I truly do
All the things I do
Are strictly for you
I can't stand being away from you
You like my other half
I honestly believe
That you especially made for me
All that time that we spent apart
Had me going insane
You facing 25 to life
Didn't know what to do
But off top I was the one
Risking myself to get those letters to you
Any way I could
It seems they took us apart for so long
As the 5-0s was trying to wash us apart
I know I know as I had the chance
I took it for granted and ended up
Falling in the same old trap
They gave me a group home
Straight set up type off hype
Knowing I was a homegirl
They but me straight on their territory
Was quick to put it down for the homegirls
Didn't let them disrespect
They was hating
So I was quick to flip the script
Ended up bouncing
'Cause I wanted so bad to be with you
You was mad but understood
Like you always have
I remember when I seen your face
An' you automatically put a smile on my face
Ran up to you 'n got under the sheets
But I found those letters
From the same female that always seem to be in the pic
You claim you never wrote her but I guess
I can't believe that we spent all this time
We spent fighting and disrespecting each other

An' now I bet we both regret it
I mean I do
I wish dat I would've showed you what you for real
meant to me
But now it's too late
'Cause I am here an' you there
Claiming that you out there being faithful
But only God knows
I got to do dis for me
An' be a savage 'bout my cabbage and ride the group
home out
So I hope you with me to da end like you say you will
Only time can tell
But the only thing that you need to know is that I love
you for life
An' forever will
Dedicated to my one and only true love Brian
From your lady Pinky
Te amo we'll be together soon if it's da last thing I do

-Pinky
From The Beat: We don't want to comment on your love, except to say we hope you don't view this man through rose-colored glasses and simply believe whatever he says because you want him in your life. Instead, we want to comment on the amount of thought, attention and skill that went into creating this love poem. We hope that you will spend even a portion of this kind of energy examining your life, thinking about what you want to achieve, and making a real plan for getting there from here. You ran from a group home to be with your man, and the consequences are that you're apart for even longer! The true encouragement in this piece is your commitment to "ride out" the next group home they put you in, because unless you complete your program, you'll just keep finding yourself wishing for things that were within your grasp to begin with.

To be honest,
I still love this game
But the love of the game will keep
me in chains

Lo Que Significan Estas Palabras

Para mí la palabra pendejo o estúpido significa varias cosas. Para las personas que se les dicen así se sienten molestos porque piensan que las estas insultando. Otras pues se resisten, pero otras la agarran como broma. Para mí es una ofensa. Soy de las personas que no le gustan bromiar con nadie.

From The Beat: Cualquier persona se sintiera un poco ofendido con estas palabra. Lo mejor que puede existir entre persona es el respeto. ¿Respetas a los demas como te gusta a ti que te respeten?

What These Words Mean

For me, the word "dumb" or "stupid" means various things. For the people who are called this, they feel bothered because they think that you are insulting them. Others, well they resist, but others take it as a joke. For me, it is something offensive. I am the kind of person that doesn't like to play around with nobody.

-Carlos, Marin

From The Beat: Any person would feel a bit offended by these words. The best thing that can exist between people is respect. Do you respect others the way you would like to be respected?

He told me that I was his friend. Then, he got me into lots of problems and he betrayed me because he put me down.

Mi Gran Desgracia

¿Q-vole Beat? Soy Diablito. Pues aqui nomas pasandola bien aburrido como siempre. Este vato les tiene malas noticias. La neta es que no se ni por donde empezar.

Pues son muchas malas noticias que me han dado en un día. Para empezar mi pinche PO esta de vacaciones y ahora otro PO se esta haciendo cargo de mi caso. Eso yo no lo sabia hasta hoy que me vinieron a dar las malas noticias. Me dijeron que me van a mandar a CYA con un maximo de ocho años y seis meses. Esa fue la otra mala noticia fue que me tranjieron a la unidad de max.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que te este pasando esto. Las cosas ya estan dichas y hechas. Ahora lo que te queda es terminar tu tiempo y hacer lo mejor para seguir tu vida. Usa este tiempo y aprende de ella. Todavia tienes una vida que vivir, al hacer este tiempo no quiere decir que toda tu vida se va al bote. Cuidate mucho y termina tu tiempo para que puedas vivir tu vida. Si ya te quitaron una parte de tu vida, no deje que te quiten el resto.

My Huge Disgrace

What's up Beat? It's me Diablito. Well, I'm just here, passing time bored as usual. This dude has bad news to share with y'all. The truth is, I don't even know where to begin.

Well, it's a lot of bad news that I have been given in one day. To begin with, my freakin' PO is on vacation and now another PO is taking charge of my case. I did not know this until today when they came to give me the bad news. They told me that they are going to send me to CYA with a maximum sentence of eight years and six months. That was the other bit of bad news that they brought to me, here in the max. unit.

-Diablito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We deeply regret that all this is happening to you. What's been said is done. Now, all you have left is to finish your time and make the best to continue on with your life. Use this time and learn from it. You still have a life to live. By doing this time, it doesn't necessarily mean that your entire life is going to be jail. Take care of yourself and finish your time so you can live your life. Yes, they have taken away a part of your life, but don't let them take away the rest.

Me Mintieron

Tristemente mi abogado me dijo que iba a salir el día de mi corte y no sali. Despues volvi a ir a corte y no sali. Esto para mí es una mentira. Ahora paso los días tristes y todos los días con la misma ropa. Cuando estaba afuera tenía ropa limpia. Ahora todavía tengo que aguantar los seis meses que me dieron aquí. Todos los días pienso en mi familia. Me gustaría hablar con ellos pero no puedo.

From The Beat: ¿Preguntastes porque te mintieron, porque no te han dejado ir? Ahora lo que te queda es terminar tu tiempo y buscar la manera como no caer en manos de esta gente para que no vuelvas a pasar por lo mismo. ¿Crees que puedas?

They Lied To Me

Sadly, my lawyer told me that I was going to get out on my court date, and I didn't leave. Then, I went back to court and I still didn't leave. For me, this was a lie. Now I spend my days sad and every single day with the same clothes. When I was on the outs, I had clean clothes. Now, I still have to put up with the six months that they gave me in here. Every day I think about my family. I would like to talk with them, but I can't.

-Federico, Marin

From The Beat: Did you ask why they lied to you, why they haven't let you go? Now, all you have left is to finish your time and find a way to avoid falling back into the hands of these people so you don't have to go through this again. Do you believe you can do this?

Mi Supuesto Amigo

Yo tenía un homie en el cual confiaba. Le confiaba mi carro y todo. Un día me robaron el estero del carro y me di cuenta que ese vato me lo había robado. Fui a pedirselo a las buenas pero el vato se me puso al brinco y me canto un tiro. Pero le dije "sabes que vato, yo te consideraba mi amigo." Despues me pidio disculpa y me devolvio el estero. Eso es todo homies. Hasta la otra semana.

From The Beat: Lo que hizo contigo estubo mal. Tomo ventaja de la confianza que le habias dado. Por lo menos, te devolvio el estero y te pidio disculpa. ¿Lo consideras tu amigo despues de lo que hizo?

My So-Called Friend

I had a friend in whom I confided. I trusted him with my car and everything. One day, someone stole the stereo from my car and I found out that the dude I trusted had been the one who had stolen it from me. I went to go ask it back from him nicely, but the dude got on the offensive and swung at me, but I told him, "You know what dude. I considered you a friend." Then, he asked me for forgiveness and he returned the stereo back to me. That's all, homies. Until next week.

-Anonymous B2

From The Beat: What he did to you was bad. He took advantage of the trust you had given him. At least he gave you back the stereo and he asked you to forgive him. Do you consider him your friend after what he did?

Mi Amigo Traicionero

Una vez yo estaba en la escuela con todos mis amigos y uno de ellos me dijo que ese quien esta ahí es muy cholo, el mero mero. Cuando salí a comer y me vino a quitar mi comida y me pelie. Despues me dijo que yo era su amigo. Despues me metio en muchos problemas y me traiciono porque me puso abajo.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a escoger bien a tus amistades. ¿Crees que aprendas despues de esto?

My Treacherous Friend

One time, I was at school with all my friends and one of them told me, "You see that guy over there. He is too gangster. He's the man." When I went out to eat, he came to take my food away and I fought him. Then, he told me that I was his friend. Then, he got me into lots of problems and he betrayed me because he put me down.

-Jesus B1

From The Beat: We hope that this experience helps you to better choose your friends. Do you believe that you learned something from this experience?

Esa Mentira

Una mentira que me hizo cambiar mucho, que me afecto fue una mentira que vino de un ser "amigo." El mintió a la policia para que me metieran aquí. Dijo que yo había hecho cosas que yo nunca hice. El no quería que yo estuviera libre. Esa fue una mentira que me esta causando muchos problemas y mucha tristeza porque todavía no salgo de este horrible lugar llamado YGC.

Esa es una mentira que el nunca debió haberla dicho porque me metio en problemas. Por causas a esto, no estoy con mi familia. Espero que esta mentira también pueda sacar de este lugar porque el ya no es una persona confiable para mí.

From The Beat: Esperamos que la verdad salga a la luz. Este mundo es pequeño y siempre sale la verdad al aire. ¿Cambiará la forma de dar confianza a la gente? A lo mejor, debistes haberlo conocido bien antes de haber confiado en él. Esperamos que aprendas esta lección.

That Lie

One lie that made me change a lot, that affected me, was a lie that came from a so-called "friend." He lied to the police so they could put me in here. He said that I had done things that I have never done. He did not want me to be free. That was a lie that is causing me many problems and lots of sadness because I'm still not out from this horrible place called "YGC."

This is a lie that he should have never said because it got into problems. Because of this lie, I am not with my family. I hope that this lie can also get me out of this place because he is no longer someone whom I can confide in.

-Christian B2

From The Beat: We hope that the truth comes to light. This world is small and the truth always comes out. Will you change the way you give your trust to people? Maybe you should have gotten to know this person better before confiding in him. We hope that you learn this lesson.

What Made Me Give Up?

I'm in the Hall right now. In this unit we do the same things ever everyday and one thing I didn't like at first is exercise because they made me work hard with many push-ups and it hurts my body. I give up 'cause I wasn't used to it, but now I'm good at it because I've been here for over seventeen days but now I think it's good for me so I can get BIG because I always wanted to get BIG.

That's all for right now, because The Beat has to go and me too, I got to go to the room. One love.

-Tub

From The Beat: Good for you for sticking with it, and seeing a positive thing in all the bad things about being locked up. We hope you also gain some inner strength while doing those push-ups and reading these Beats, and use it when you get out to STAY out.

Started Young

When I was little, I started robbing people and stealing. I beat people up and take their stuff because I see my brother do it to people. I learned to rob people and steal cars from my brother. That's how I am now.

-Khmer

From The Beat: What a shame that your brother didn't show you some skills that could bring you up in life, rather than bringing you down into the hall. If you had a little brother who looked up to you, what kind of older brother would you want to be?

Main Girl

Don't wake me up because I'm dreaming about my baby Lashawn. Every night yeah I dream about this girl because every man should have a main girl. Yeah she dreams about me every night and I know that she do because I'm Lil' Pug and I get them to love me. I don't know how I guess it's the lovin'.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: Well if she's your main girl, and you've got other girls, then she might have other boys too, so be careful with your confidence that your love making skills are so good that she won't do just what you're doing: keeping her options open. Have the courage to give your love to one woman, and you'll be surprised at what a reward you'll get!

I'm Tired

Sometimes the whole world get on my nerves and I get tired, but just sit back and let this purple take me higher.

People say I'm bad, but I just sit back and try to stay off the block. People already know that I go too hard, I go too hard, quick-fast, like a Nascar super charged. With no brakes, but I got bars.

-Deandre

From The Beat: You are tired cause you move fast and smoke purple. Slow down and look around you. You're life has got you exhausted and you are sitting in jail. Don't you think it's time to make some changes?

Why I Do What I Do

I do what I do because I was always surrounded by thugs and gangs. I see people coming up, so I do what I do. Shhh is so crazy, so many murders in the world. To be continued

-Goonie T

From The Beat: This sure is a crazy world. But, now that you see why you are the way you are, is there anything you would like to change about yourself? And now, you really understand the power of the company that you keep. Where will your life go? How will people that grow up around you be influenced?

Brotherhood

When I was little, it was just me and my family. I had a father that was an original gangster. Despite that he was always there for me, despite his bad directions.

I had a mom that was very very intelligent and she was very loving.

I had two brothers who would kill and die for me. And five sisters.

And then I have the hood homies, my partners. We do everything together. And there are the bra bra's. They will forever be my brothers, not just because how close we are but because...

-G

From The Beat: ...because of what? We do want to hear the rest of your story, so please keep writing. In the meantime, thing about what it means to love someone so much you'd "Kill and die for them". Would you really want one of your brothers to go to jail for life, because he killed someone for you? Would you really want one of your brothers to get killed in revenge for killing someone for you? Is revenge really a true expression of love?

A Lovely Dream

The last time when I was having a lovely dream was about me robbing a house and when I walked in the master bedroom I found a whole stack of money and I left and after that I went and bought a scraper and got some new gold ones.

-Mien

From The Beat: Maybe next time you dream, you'll dream about being little and knowing nothing about crime and juvenile hall, and then when you wake up you can make a decision to leave all that behind you and do things a different way?

This Is To All My Ninjas

Rip Wax, Rip Ready Rock, Tay Ray Ray, Rod, Carikby, JR. I will never forget y'all. I will always love y'all.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: This is to you, Lil' Tuttie: LIVE IN PEACE.

Why I Hug The Block

I hug the block because it's a lot of money out there to be made and it's a lot of girls out there that want you and it's a lot to do on the block.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: Good point, but there's a lot going on in the rest of the world too, so don't limit yourself to what you see. Go explore. First stop, the school house!

Different

When I get out I'm goin' to do things differently. I'm not going to hang out like I used to hang out. I'm gonna change some of the people I used to kick it with. Real talk, I plan on going to church, I swear to God. I really plan to change my life around - I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna.

-Will

From The Beat: You can never say it too many times, keep saying it until you have the strength and opportunity to do it. And don't forget to ask for help - from God or from family/friends - because no one can change alone.

It Is Okay To Cry

Yes because after you will feel much better. I don't care where I'm at or who I am in front of I will cry in the time of need of when I'm hurting inside.

-Rush

From The Beat: Good for you. If you feel like crying, cry.

My Circle

My circle is my ninjas, my family, and my peoples. We call ourselves the circle 'cause whatever happens to one person happens to all, if one ninja eats, we all eat. If one ninja loses somebody, we all lose somebody. We stick to the circle like glue. If you in the circle I got love and respect for you if you ain't then I don't care. Hate it or love it, you can see but you can't touch and can't be above it.

-Lil' Jb.

From The Beat: Why does loving everyone in your circle also mean not caring about people outside it? That formula is what is killing young men in our streets this year. We all need circles, so you are lucky to have that kind of love and support, but use it to help the rest of the world, not to isolate yourselves.

My Own Footsteps

What made me give up, well I really haven't given up, but I have looked down on myself because I always wanted to be like my brother, but he got locked up for fighting the police.

-Dorsey

From The Beat: That is tough, to have the person you look up to do something you don't want to follow. It hurts to see him in pain (everyone in jail feels pain, right?) but it also probably hurts you to have your idol fall from grace. You can still love and admire him, but look up to yourself. Be yourself, because your brother doesn't want you to make the same mistakes he's made.

When I Was Little

When I was little I never thought I would be in this situation like being locked-up in this unit, and I thought I would never commit a crime like breaking into people's homes and into gas stations.

-Mien

From The Beat: How did it happen? How did you change from being a naive child with no "bad" intentions, into a young man with some bad habits? What can you do to reverse it? Do you want to?

The Last Time I Saw Emmitt

One day I was in the house and I left my house and went up to the Eastmont Mall and my patnas Emmitt RIP and Lil' Morkas were up there and they were like "What's up Lil' Pug?"

I was like "What's up."

And they were like, "Where are the girls at?" and I was like "They should be in the mall."

They was like "Alright." And that was the last time I was with my ninja Emmitt. Rest In Paradise

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: The last time you see someone before they lose there life can be a memory burned into your heart forever, and so we thank you for sharing this precious memory with us!

When I Was Little

When I was little me and my brothers we used to go to the school house and shoot paint ball guns at the school and everybody else.

I used to love to run from dogs when they get lose, but when I almost got killed by one and the police told me that they would let the dog out and bite me. The whole time me and my brothers was fighting dogs, I just miss when I was little.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: Appreciate the memories. How old were you shooting them paint ball guns at the school? And why would you like to run from dogs? Did you tease the dogs and then run? Not good. Any other memories? Why do these memories stand out?

Meanwhile At The Party

Lil' Dre: This party cranking
 Lil' Mainy: I'm bout to take her
 to the bathroom I'll be back
 Lil' Dre: I got one two I right behind
 you Bra
 Lil' Mainy: We bout to take
 these bit** to the house
 Lil' Dre: Hold on let's tell da squad we
 out
 Lil' Mainy: Lil' Dre, Lil' Chris,
 Drewzy, Meech we out. Lil' ninja be safe.
 Lil' Mainy/ Lil' Dre: Alright we out y'all

Meanwhile at the house
 Partying to the wee hours

Meanwhile In The Morning...

Lil' Mainy and Lil' Dre: You's got to cut!
 Lil' Mainy: What up Bra, what's going on
 tonight?
 Lil' Dre: Shhh, this lil' function
 downtown.
 Lil' Mainy: What's up? We there.
 Lil' Dre: You already know.
 Lil' Mainy: We got some female online.
 Lil' Dre: Ninja I got some females online.
 Lil' Mainy: It's like that bra?
 Lil' Dre: She got sisters to choose from
 Lil' Mainy: Shhh, I got the grapes, you got
 the pills bra?
 Lil' Dre: Pop one, pop two, ninja thizz
 Lil' Mainy: So what time you want to
 squad up.
 Lil' Dre: At about 9-9:30.
 Lil' Mainy: That's cool, then I'm about to
 see my baby-mama real quick.

- Lil' Mainy and Lil' Dre
From The Beat: The only reason that we decided to print it is because we want to know how it ends. Really, what is the point of printing this piece? You owe it to us to tell us something more. Take us for a ride into your life. We get tired with the whole, hook-up with girls and do drugs scenario, it's boring and leads to nothing but trouble and heartache. Can you tell us a good story?

My Favorite Basketball Player

I remember when I went to camp
 Yo' boy Kobe is a three time champ
 I wish he could again
 Him and Jordan was made to win
 He needs to get it off his chest
 They often say, that's he's the best.

-Clarence
From The Beat: What you say is kinda true, plus you said it in rhyme, so we know how they do. We're sure before Kobe calls it quits in the NBA he'll be a champ a couple more times.

Too Much Weed?

Man, what's up Beat, I'm back in the Hall. I'm here for a fake ass warrant man, a ninja cut his EM off. It's good they probably send me to camp or Thunder Road. They said I smoke too much weed.

-D-Bo
From The Beat: We're sorry you're back in The Hall, but we are always glad to welcome you back in our pages. Now, what they say is one thing. What do you think? Do you think you smoke too much weed? Did you cut off your EM? From our point of view, when it comes to weed any amount at all is too much - because it's against the law, and we hate seeing any of you get caught up in the law. But also, it's known to be a drug that makes people lethargic slow. They lose track of their responsibilities, they lose their motivation, they lose that edge you need to compete in this world. Has smoking weed ever gotten in the way of doing what you need to do? And what's up with violating your probation? Why did you cut off your EM?

Where Will You Be In Five Years?

Where will I be in five years, I just don't know where I'm going to be in five years. I'm not really thinking about that right now, I'm thinking about my time and if I'm going to be there for my son when he is born in this world.

-Father to be
From The Beat: That's very important to think about your son. The best thing you can do for him is to plan his life. His birthday is no doubt, important. But, the rest of his life is even more important. Think about your future and his. You must think about where you want to be, otherwise you'll never get there. Just like the game, Chess, you've got to plan your life five moves in advance or you may lose. Your going to be a dad, think like one. Congrats! Think about tomorrow and five, ten fifteen years from now. You have a son that needs for you to think, otherwise, in the end you will be full of regret!

What I Think Will Happen When I Die?

I know I did stuff in my past but I ask for forgiveness of all my sins not just in the Hall, but on the outs. I at least spend one hour every Sunday at church, so I know where I am going and that is Heaven.

I think that Heaven is a place where we all will be treated equally.

-Rush
From The Beat: Rush, that's great vision of Heaven. Do you treat people equally? Do you want the best for everybody? Perhaps that is the secret to life, and the recipe to create Heaven, right here on Earth.

Loving My Boyfriend

Loving my boyfriend feels so good. But only if he understood, I'm so happy to be with him. Never ever want to leave him.

Sometimes he gets mad and sometime sad. I learn to deal with him every way I could. See, I thought he would love me the way I do. Hopefully things would change it just won't happen all in one day. Loving my boyfriend will take time. I just gotta focus on my mind. Maintain my brain and stay out of jail.

Sometimes I hate him for what he put me though, but I'm confused. What I should do with him. I love him, but I still don't understand him. I'm just having problem loving my boyfriend.

-Angelina
From The Beat: Angelina, do you think he loves you? It feels good to love someone, but it feels a whole lot better to love someone who loves you back. Maybe being with you isn't the best thing for him - it sure isn't the best thing for you. Just because you feel like you love him doesn't mean that you need to stay in a relationship with him. Say "yes" to love, but maybe you should say "no" to this relationship. What do you think?

My Beautiful Dreams

Me and my boyfriend been together for five years. He ain't never treated me bad. But I did him wrong. I lied, I cheated, but I told him I did it. He forgave me, said he loved me, he said, he hope I never do it again. Ever since then, I've been loyal. We go to parties together and we hang out.
 I miss my daddy

-Birthday Girl Dominique
From The Beat: We're glad that you're with someone who treats you well, and that you try to treat him with respect too.

Respect Me

To get respect you have to give it so respect me or you going to get it, and that's real. To me respect is everything, so that's why I want a ninja to respect me. Why I say this is because real ninjas feel me, and fake ninjas don't even know what I'm saying. So respect me, or else. Know that.

-Baby Lou
From The Beat: You have our respect, Baby Lou, but as for wht you're asking your peers for in this piece, we're not sure. You can't demand respect, or threaten people to get it, you have to earn it. It sounds like what you're asking for isn't real respect at all. Who are the people you personally most respect?

Don't Wake Me!

Don't wake me up 'cause I'm havin the dream of my life

It includes me and my wife
 We doin it big this night
 I'm mean, I got a girl that's by my side
 A real Bonnie and Clyde
 When shhh gets hard
 She by my side
 Ready to ride
 She don't like me smoking
 She loves me to death
 Anything happen to me
 She a do something to herself.

-Lil' Dizil
From The Beat: Lil' Dizil, Bonnie and Clyde died at a young age. They did not live a glamorous life at all, we repeat, at all. They were notorious bank robbers. Don't get caught up in the hype. Your 'Ride or Die' dream is only a dream. Your real lifestyle won't get you in the history books. Don't bring this girl down with you. If the two of you are down for each other like you say, then help keep each other stay out of trouble and get into school!

I Like Her

My name is Ray Thizz and it's this girl I like but I don't know if she likes me, but I really like to get to know her. She looks like she could be the one for me. I know it's seen like I'm going out, but she looks too good to let go. When she smiles she makes me smile. I love her so much and I don't really know her, she makes my heart beat slow and fast at the same time. I do get down now.

-Ray Thizz
From The Beat: Well, Ray Thizz, you should talk to her. If she makes you feel this excited you should try to holla at her. But, we suggest getting your life back in order first. Your chances of winning this girl's heart, from the Hall, are very slim.

I Can't Live Without You

From liking, to crushing, to loving all I would think about is you

I couldn't live without you
 I felt I would die if I couldn't have you!
 I loved you, you loved me
 It was only you and me
 Side by side

'Till the end of time
 'Till the day we die
 I guess it's true you only get one shot at true love
 Now I wish it didn't have to end like this
 But I guess it wasn't meant to be
 You and me this can't be
 Now that you left me
 It sad to say but
 I don't have no more left inside me
 Dedicated to Cara

-Spooky
From The Beat: Ahh... love make us feel like we can do anything. And heartache hurts like nothing else. Don't worry, you're still young, and in due time there will be a new love in your life. Our hearts have the capacity to love more than just one (a few). Keep your head up.

Accepting Jesus

I think that when you die, I don't think you die alone. I think somebody goes with you. I don't want to find out yet, but I'm not scared to die. I have accepted Jesus in my life. I'm going to Heaven, but I need to change my ways, or I will end up in Hell. When I get out I'm gonna try to go to church more, and pray more. Until next time.

-Young Sav
From The Beat: This is a worthy plan and a worthy promise. What do you feel like inside after you've prayed? Do you feel calmer, cleansed, hopeful? Do you feel it in your heart, or in your mind? Do you sleep better? Tell us more about how this change has affected your mind, your feelings and your attitude.

Untitled

I thought about callin' you
But I changed my mind
The moment I thought about what you
Do to me every time.

I'm tryna come home and see ya
But you actin' like you can't make no
Time for me

So I putting down this receiver
And if you don't know by now just
How much I need ya
Then you'll never know.

How I feel.
It's only gonna change if ya let it
And it's real see
I'll be more than yo' guarantee
You losen me

You used to be so attentive
Call me at least twice a day
But now I have no support, no attention
To keep me lovin' you this way
I sit alone waitin' patiently for you to
Return to me
But I can't believe just how long you
Would play a ticket.

-Shaquiao
From The Beat: It sounds like you're ready to move on, which, from what you say in your poem, seems like the right thing to do. Remember that the only people worth being with are ones who treat you with respect.

It Ain't Worth It

At times, giving up is not the thing to do. At times, you have to keep on going to find out on your own what you really have to do.

Me, myself, I never gave up at the life of crime, because I had to find out on my own. I had to find out for myself that it ain't worth it! So do what you do and don't give up just yet.

-Chantha
From The Beat: It's a deep truth that we each must find out for ourselves, and you know some of us are hard-headed. On the other hand, it's like you're on an elevator going down, and you can choose to get off on any floor before you hit bottom. You feel? Or you can hit bottom, pull out a jack hammer, and dig a deeper hole.

At Camp

I want to get my GED while I am at Camp, because it can help me in the future in my life. That's why I want to get my GED while I am at Camp.

And while I am at Camp, I can think about what I want to do when I get out of Camp. I am working on getting my GED before my release, so I can get a job and so I can be a success in life.

That's what I am working on doing here at Camp. I am working on becoming a success in life — so I can go back home to my family.

-Delmont
From The Beat: Right on! Stay on that positive track, in here and when you go back home. That way you won't have to be locked up ever again but can stay free, outside with family and friends.

What Happens When You Die

There is not too much that can happen when you die, but you're gone and your heart stops pumping life into your body.

-Mareece
From The Beat: Do you believe that the soul dies along with the body, or that the soul lives on?

Dark Thoughts

they say i'm a sucker
'cause i keep my thoughts to myself
so just think for a sec'
if i really show you how i felt
would you ever want to wish that
you never came about
'cause now it's late
and everyone's about
so why did i have to come out

-Mien G
From The Beat: Sometimes we wish we'd never been born when all we really need to do is take a turn in our lives, realize we need to live another way. Then day by day, things go from bad to okay. And then one day, joy and happiness come our way. It's far from too late to change your fate.

Untitled

I'm missin' my daddy'
I'm missin' his sexy voice
Missin' his love
I'm missin' his touch
God I love him so much.
I'm missin' his company
Missin' his warm lovin' security
I'm missin' his kisses that make me shake
His wonderin' stare in my eyes
That keeps us both guessing
Daddy I miss you while I toss and turn,
Daddy I miss you while these long days go by.
Daddy I love you, I want to come home

-Suggas
From The Beat: We hope you get home to your loved ones and we hope even more that you do what you need to do to stay out of juvie and this man you miss is supportive in seeing that you stay out of places like this.

To All In The Hall

To all in the Hall, keep yo' head up. Well, this is all I'm a keep of the words I wrote down on this sheet, 'cause The Beat told me to keep it all PG. So ladies, get at me here at Camp Sweeney, 'cause you know who I be — and what I'm looking for is a pen-pal. So get at me at Camp. But now, The Beat can't print my last name, but some of y'all know me. Yes, I'm black; you know who I be. So get the Camp address and write to me.

-Baby Boi
From The Beat: You are always trying to work an angle. If all you want is a pen-pal, why does it have to be a lady? Baby Boi, please! Write about what you plan to do different after your release!

Group Homes

Every group home ain't gonna be what you want it to be. The next group home could be worse.

-Lil' T
From The Beat: That's right youngsters! Think about that, before you run.

Why I Gave Up On School

The reason why I gave up on school, is because I wanted to be hard-headed and steal, rob and sell drugs to make money the fast way, plus pull females because I love their physical attention, especially on early school mornings. (But once I got to jail, I always think back on what my mom told me that morning before I left out the house.) Well, that's the reason I gave up on school. See y'all next week here at Camp.

-Lil' Mophead
From The Beat: So what is it your mom said before you left out the house? And will it change how and what you do after you get back out? What do you think of school here at Camp? Or maybe you want to get your GED quick so you can look of a j-o-b when you're finished with this Camp visit?

My Young Life, The Condensed version

When I was little I had pretty good grades, I was doing okay... but when I got to middle school I started cuttin school with my cousin and I failed 8th grade so I went to alternative school then I passed to 9th grade so I went to Skyline. Then I transferred back, then I started cuttin school again, then I went to jail and I got out and went to jail again .. got sent to a group home..

I ran, then one year something later I turn myself in and now I'm in jail again waiting for my court this Thursday to see if I'm gonna get to go home or not.

So yeah I really don't know my point of this but it's my life story of same stuff I sorta went through. It's kind of boring because if you know the details it's not. I have nothing else to say so I'm gonna kick rocks

-Chynadoll
From The Beat: It sounds like you're stuck in a cycle and we worry that if you don't do something about it you'll keep repeating the same mistakes. Can you think of a way to start stepping out of your patterns? What will you do when you get out this time? You know by now that cutting school and doing things that will get you arrested only leads back to jail, so what will you do to change?

First Home Visit

Well, what's up? Yeah, this Tui Tui from Camp saying what's up! Ta-da-da! I mean, I'm writing about when I went home!

The first thing I did was kick it with my mom and bro's and sis'. Then I went to the block, kicked it for a minute. Then I went to my cousin's baby's baptism, and after that went to Crab Cove in Alameda and had a barbecue! All the fam-bam was there! Then I went to my homeboy's mass. It's been a year since he been dead. He got killed on the Fourth of July, by the police.

And I went to see my grandma in the hospital for an hour, then went back to the spot, got some female attention, and came back to Camp. And I'm pimpin' Camp! Get up out this place and go back home and do cool, 'cause times are changing. Got to wake your game up! So, 'till then, I'm out!

-Tui Tui
From The Beat: Wow! What a full home visit! Was that all in a day? So much happened that fills the heart with joy and pain! You've got a lot of people in your life that you care about and who care about you. Everyone of them is a good reason to stay free. The best way to wake up your game is to change — more of the same old pain if you go back to the same old game, and that would be a shame! God bless your grandma. RIP to your dead homie.

Mike, RIP

Rest in Peace to my brother Mike. He was shot and killed for a reason I don't wish to speak on. But everybody who knew him for real knows.

But anyway, we will miss him. He was only seventeen years of age. He was a rapper and he was pretty good at it. He was a money getta and he sure wasn't a sucka. Ninjas don't want to see 'em.

Man why bra have to go so soon? But shhhh we all gotta go sometimes. We'll truly miss you and we will see you when it is our time to go.

-Casey
From The Beat: Like we said on your other piece, this is a tragedy amongst a series of tragedies that are stealing our best youth from us. What was Mike like? What do you most miss about him? Could you describe him — his fit, his jokes, his dreams, his high points, and keep a part of his spirit alive, through your words?

When I Was Little

When I was little, I was a young mobster growing up, learning the game. And as I was growing, I was trying to get the fame.

And it's not the same no more! Like around 2000, I was running around the corners, having fun, and it was all peace around where I'm from. But right now, 2006, you out here walking — dead on the streets!

-Young Green Eyes Boy
From The Beat: The number of guns in the streets, has increased dramatically. So has the average age of the youngster on the corner calling himself a real gangster, strapped for "protection". The only thing left to learn in the game, is how to get out alive.

Rape Is The Worst Crime A Person Can Commit

Is when a boy rapes a girl because she is not ready to take it to the next level so he decide to take it not caring about how he will effect her life mentally.

-Rush

From The Beat: You're right Rush, that's a horrible crime. What kind of punishment

shackled from Head to Foot

Saludos Beat, first off let me start this with a embracement your way and foremost by sending you my utmost love and respect. Gvo Beat this be Lil' Looney coming at you from Max.

It's kinda sad how my mom gots to see me shackled up from head to feet. Now they're sending me away to a group home, but I'm just going to do my time and not letting my time do me. We stand tall through it all. Now I feel my mom's pain, because they're taking me away, and I wish I could go in the past and change it, but this is the life I chose. I just wish that I could hurry up and out. I'm tired of his county food.

-Looney

From The Beat: It is sad, thinking of your mom having to see you that way. Especially because your mom is probably the person in the world who knows you best, and who knows who the real you is. What do you think her hopes are for that Real You? What would she like your future to look like? Is it the same future you want for yourself? Or is it different? Could you describe that future? Ten years from now, where do you want to end up?

Don't Wake Me Up 'Cause I'm Dreaming

One night I fell asleep and I was fighting this person. I was winning for a minute. Then he kicked me in my stomach, then Lil Emmit ran from all the way from down the street, jumped on the car and kicked the person's head into the windshield. RIP Lil' Emmit.

-C

From The Beat: The good thing about this dream is your friend Emmit was still alive. The bad thing about the dream is that it's more violence happening on our streets. We hope you wake up from the violence soon enough to save the lives of yourself and your other friends.

What Is The Worst Crime A Person Can Commit?

I think the worst crime is murder because you are taking somebody's life and yours should go too if you take somebody's life.

-Mervin

From The Beat: Marvin, we agree that murder is a very serious crime. Do you think that if the Death Penalty was practiced more frequently we would have less murders?

Dreamin'

When I dream I like to dream about my wify. Dude, don't wake me up 'cause I'm dreaming about my wify. I just like dreaming about her 'cause it feels good to dream about someone you love in your life.

And that's my wify because that's the one I love the most because she's in my life the most and she ain't left yet. That's what I love about her 'cause she's a ride or die chick,

we've been together for seven years and we still ain't broke up yet 'cause our love is too strong.

I love her from the bottom of my heart so when I'm dreaming don't mess with me 'cause it's about her.

This yo boy G-Money.

-G-Money

From The Beat: WOW! You are a lucky young man, it is rare to share such lasting love as a young teenager. You are lucky, and also deserve much respect.

Questions And Answers

1. When is it OK to cry? When you are hurt or experiencing dumb ass pain.

2. What's the worst crime possible? Murder. Because you're taking someone's life, and that's something that can never change.

3. What do you do when you die? You go to heaven or a place of peace. I think that many people do feel calm.

-Bycho

From The Beat: Each of these short answers is so good, it's like each sentence could be the opening line of a full-on story or something. Three for three - we can't wait til we read some of your longer work!

Dear Beat

Yesterday was my cousin Cell's birthday (RIP) Man I miss him hella much, but I know everything happens for a reason. I know I'll see his face again, we both be going dumb in Heaven.

I just wanted everyone who knew Cell to stay. I love you Marcellus Haley, Rest in Peace.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: Our apologies for misspelling Marcellus's last name on your other piece. Glad you've written about him again so we can correct. Then again, how important is your life? How bad do you want to live a stress free life, free of drama and the system? We hope due to Cell you have found the reason to live long and prosper.

Dreams

Came around and all the girls were sleeping all over the place and there was a ring on the door and I didn't know who it was. Then there was a key went into the door, and I knew it was my girl, so I didn't know what to do. All them girls was still sleeping on the floor and on the couch, naked so when she walked and she was like what the F is wrong with you, and why do you have all these girls at the house, and then she asked me did I have a part in here and I didn't know what to say --I was just stuck .

Then she walked out of the house and then they woke me up and the dream went away so that's all I had remembered of the dream.

-Manman

From The Beat: Some people think that when we feel guilty, we have dreams about being afraid that we're going to get caught. Is everything cool with you and your girl?

Praise

I think you go to Heaven if you with God and go to church and believe in him and praise him every day. You don't have to praise him every day, but once in a while.

They say that you have to get baptized before you can get accepted into the gates. You have to get your sins washed away.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Praising God isn't just about what prayers you say, but about how you live, in how you act: How do you intend on living your life as a praise of what you believe in?

When Is It OK to Cry? Anytime

To me, anytime is OK to cry .

I don't care what nobody says about me crying.

I'm a boss and I know it.

I got me a girl that I've had for years, and I ain't tryin' to lose her.

I ain't scared to say it, but I'm still solid.

-LB

From The Beat: It's good to hear. A boy is afraid to cry, but a man knows how.

LIFE!

The worst crime is murder, because when you kill someone that's taking someone's life and that is a big crime. That's life in prison!

-Thomas

From The Beat: You're so right. There's the punishment by society, but then there's the punishment inside, as you grapple with the weight of having taken a life. A person's life is like a whole world, so when you take it, it's like destroying a world. Sometimes we wonder, which is worse, the jailtime, or that terrible knowledge weighing on one's conscience?

When I Get Out

What's up Beat, I can't wait until I get out so I could get active on some stuff. I'm trying to go see some girls, so I could get active on that. Then I'm gone, I see what's up wit' my potnas and see what they up to, then I'm gone.

Go kick it wit' ma family and go get something to eat or something. Just chill wit' ma family, then see how my hood is, then I'm gon' probaby get into some real sshh wit' some real ninjas.

I probably won't smoke or nothing because I probably get pee tested then after it gets night I'm gone have a girl spend the night with me, then do ma grand theft, then go to sleep.

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: The only thing about this plan that scares us is that the minute you get in touch with your old potnas, you're going to want to do what they're doing, and you could get caught back up and lose your freedom. So what are you going to do to make sure that doesn't happen?

Y'all Out, Thug Life

What's up wit' it Beat, this is Onio. Man I am just tryin' to be cool up here, wishin' we can get out so we can get some cash bounce like it's nothin' new and show the haters what it do.

They say cash money is an army, but what about my crew?

I always stay real, stay true, holdin' my figure never talk to the law, I will always hold my potnas down at war,

-Onio

From the Beat: Loyalty is a beautiful thing, but not when it is all about revenge, in death. If you really, truly, care about the future of your crew, shouldn't you try to find a way to help each other get out of the death cycle of the streets, instead of feeding into this mess.

A Good Time Dream

What's up Beat?

The best dream I've ever had was when I was laying in the juvenile hall bed that they assigned to me. It was when I dreamed that I was at home having a good time with my family, laughing, joking, and showing love to everybody, basically having fun.

-Terica

From The Beat: It sounds like a dream that could come true, and we hope it does soon.

Dream, Interrupted

I was having a good dream about some girls. I was walkin' down the streets when I seen some girls. They was starin' at me, then I walked up to them, then I was like, "what's up wit' it baby?" And she said, "What's up wit' you?" I'm like, "Nothin', what's yo' name?" Then she told me her name then she said, "What's yo' name?" I told her and said, "What you and yo' friend about to get into?" And then I said could me and my potnas come mess wit' y'all later on? They said, "What time?" I'm like, "Around 10pm." They said "Meet us right here," I said, "All right." Then they said, "Bye." I went to talk to my potnas, they said, "It's cool." Then we was smokin', chillin' fo' a minute. Then it hit 9:50 pm. We went to where we was gon' meet the girls at the spot, then we seen them, then I went to go talk to them, then we was talkin' for a minute. It was four girls and four boys. I asked one of my potnas to get some weed and some Swishers, and then he did, and came back, and then we got high.... I said, "What's up wit' it?" And then she was like, "You ready?" And I'm like, "hell yeah, I'm ready" And then the staff opened that door and said "Washing up!" And I'm like, dang. Holla at ya' boy.

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: Yikes! If we've ever heard an argument for staying out of jail, it's this one. The system even messes with dream time. So what are you doing here? Get out and stay out! What's the plan! Not smoking Purp, right?!

Two Months

What it do, this yo' boy Baby Lou. I'm here holdin' it down for my ninjas. But what's good. I need to now because I got about two months until I get out and do what I do best - that's getting money. So until then, keep yo' head up.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: And how do you plan on getting that money, Baby Lou? Because if you plan to get back to what you were doing, you should tell the counselors to keep old room number free. We're serious - we want you to tell us you have a better plan.

This Reign

Writin' you reign
me too expecting, but disappointment, reign
My world distorted and hollow 'till angels
of life come about
Stand tall. Don't fold 'cause it ain't the end.....
it's the beginning of lovin', no time for pain, and
In the worst situations you reign!!

-Thinkin'

From The Beat: Nice piece. The distorted and hollow world is really striking—we wonder, who is the poem's "you" who reigns?

Camp Talk

up here ninja think they hard
and they yap like a bullet
isn't going to ever hit them
then when they post on the block
and somebody bustin' at them
they start running for their life
don't let your mouth open up 'cause
you don't want your mouth opened up

-Tonga

From The Beat: It's not about being hard; it's about being smart — and it's smarter to keep your mouth shut, stay off the block, and make your pay the legal way. And the one bustin' is the one who most needs some mental adjustin'; without question, he's headed in the wrong direction, and there'll be a day when he has to pay.

Two Kinds of Dreams

When I be dreamin', sometimes I dream about bad things, but I don't mind wakin' up from those ones. But there are those dreams I be having that be making me drool and the ones that make me smile.

The ones that make me smile are the ones I have about bein' free with my family. The best one I've had was when I had just got home and we were having a barbecue to celebrate my release. All my family was there, smiles on all of their faces. But then staff done woke me up, and vanished my dream by the turn of their key. Now the dreams that make me drool, I can't really discuss, because they want to keep it Beat appropriate, but use your imagination.

It involves two to how many girls you can imagine.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Good work on keeping it Beat appropriate - just shows that when you want something (to publish your writing in the newspaper), you can show restraint (move that X rating down to PG).... What are some of the other things you want in life that you need to show restraint in in order to get what you want?

RIP

To my ninjas up in heaven, resting and holdin' it down up there. Don't trip, my ninjas be holdin' it down for you, and ridin' for you . RIP Ddubb, Craig, Coc, Mark, Mikey, Lil 'C, Big Gilk, Lil 'Will, Pizo, Ducky. I miss you all. I love you all. I wish I was still there with you, holdin' it down, gettin' high, with me thuggin' it on the block.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: There are too many people on this list. It hurt us to type it up, but not nearly as much as it must hurt you to live with these losses. But the question is, how? Thuggin' on the block is exactly what took most of them away. And yet that's what you want to go back and do. Don't you ever wonder what the world beyond the block is like? They say everything happens for a reason, and maybe there's a reason you're not on that long list of RIP's. Maybe you're still here so you can be the one guy who gets away, who travels, who has adventures: Goes somewhere out of state for college, travels to Russia, learns to ride a horse, buys his own house, maybe comes back and fixes up the neighborhood for real. What do you believe your purpose is?

Getting Out

This ya boy kionte up in the hall for his last days man I'm about to go so dumb in the clubs cause ya boy been down for 5 months an that long enough to be up in the hall I've been in here ninja's be catting off to the fullest you feel me but I'm out

-Lil Kionte

From The Beat: Be careful out there...

Society Failed Me

I went to court on the 23rd and the judge was going to let me go then the DA brought up that I have not been going to school. I missed to weeks of school then the judge said he was going to hold my case for two more weeks.

Before I left I looked back and I seen my sister crying 'cause I wasn't going home. Hopefully on July 7th, I get to go home with my mom. Tomorrow I've been here for a month. I never like being away from my family, hopefully I get to go home on July 7th, with my family.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: So are you going to stay in school when you get out? We're sure that your family misses you too, so do what you have to to stay free when you get there.

Kickin' it in the Hall

What it do Beat, it's your boy Lil' Spanky from Hayward droppin some linas from max. Just kickin' it, feel me?

Well they tryin' to give me nine years in the Y. But I ain't goin' out like that just yet. So I waved time on they ass and kept it movin' to another judge, feel me.

I just want to say keep it solid to my family Lil' De and Mario. We brothers from a different mother, let's keep it solid behind these walls and let this time go by, so we could kick it in the hood and get ef'd up and kick it with the hynas.

-Lil' Atam

From The Beat: Your short term plan sounds good - stick with your friends, fight your case, keep your head up. But your long term plan sounds like you're buying a round trip ticket right back to that 8 by 6. Is that really what you want? Wake up and don't be the fool in the end.

Want To Snap

What it do, how you been Beat?

It's all good over here in Max. I'm just chillin' like a villain, feel me. Well I can't wait 'til I get out here.

I go to court Thursday for sentencing, so I'm lightweight nervous. My mom said she wants me to get my life together, so I'm kinda thinking of what I really want in life. To me smokin' and drankin' is coo' but after awhile it gets boring, and so does coming to jail. I hate the police and task force and all judges. I want to get out but they keep me in jail, until the point where I'm ready to snap on anybody at this point.

I keep my head on my shoulders to stay right by living by these rules in order to come out my room.

..?

From The Beat: Sounds like you're managing to cope under even this terrible stress. Keep holding on, all that inner strength you build up by keeping your eyes on the prize in the court and in the Hall can help you keep up your fight when you get out - and when you start trying to come up with new ways to have fun. What about sports, music, programs at school that you always wanted to check out, learning how to make movies. When you get out, find a teacher you were always cool with, and ask that teacher to help you find stuff to do that won't land you back in here. Who knows, it might even make all the hell you went through on lockdown feel worthwhile!

Untitled

I never really gave up, it's more that I just didn't give a damn, I had so many good possibilities in my life but I just lost care for them and I wish I wouldn't have. Schools failed me because I stopped going to school and getting into the streets. Schools never called home cops never placed me back in school I was truant and the school just dropped me. My parents didn't quite see this all happen. All these drugs on the streets made society mess me up.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It sounds like you wish someone would have stepped in, which is what so many people need when they are spiraling downward. We wish everyone had the support they needed to be happy and live a good life. What can you do now from where you're at? It's never too late to be your own support.

When I Was Little

What's up Beat, it's you boy Ally-Bo.. When I was little I cared about nothing but me. I cared about what the homies thought about me, but now I do stuff without anybody knowing and don't care. That's the bad part. I should have thought before I acted.

To all behind these messed up walls keep your head up, mind straight up and out, don't strike out.

-Lil' Ally-Bo

From The Beat: Truly good advice—we hope it reaches your readers.

Smashing

Smashing, dashing, hitting them corners, posted in my varrio drinking coronas.

With the homies from the block smoking them grapes,
being in many hoods all over the bay.
A lot of suckas like to speak on Gumby, but I don't give a damn
you know them ninjas is hungry.

Me I stay eating putting in work
You can catch me walking all over them streets,
or maybe in the hall writing for The Beat.
Since the get go always been about my scratch,
with the homies blowing off an ounce of that.
Death before dishonor yeah I said that,
die before I change, best believe I'm banging.
Hate those who oppose what I'm about,
Oh damn I'm still in the hall

-Lil' Gumby
From The Beat: It's always a shame to see someone with talent waste themselves in jail and waste their time writing that they are the baddest gangsters in the land, Shh, you know how many people talk the mess and in the end kick themselves in the ass, as they sit on deathrow, or in the Pelican Bay SHU? You're piece is good and you're obviously smart, but you're not saying anything new. Why don't you challenge yourself to write about something other than smoking and drinking and death before dishonor?

Dreamin'

I had two dreams while I was locked up. One dream I had while I was in Hillcrest juvenile hall. I had a dream that I was at home sleeping in my room. Then I woke up and realized that I was still locked up in San Mateo, the other dream I had was when I was locked up in San Francisco's YGC.

I had three back to back dreams that I was going to be a daddy. Then when I got out my girl told me she was pregnant. That was back in March.

Now it's the end of June and my girl is 20 weeks pregnant and we are having a boy. The due date is November 22.

I have court tomorrow, so hopefully I will get out so I can get a job to save some money up.

-Lazy
From The Beat: Congratulations and good luck with fatherhood. You'll definitely be in need of that job so you can take good care of your baby boy—we're glad you have a plan and hope you stick to it.

Let Me Sleep

There have been a couple of times I have been dreaming and really didn't want to wake up. One time I was dreaming that I was rich and every thing in my life was perfect. I was happy and having fun. It seemed so real because I must have been asleep for a long time. I just know that I was hella mad when I woke up.

-Unknown
From The Beat: Most of us can relate to having dreams and wanting them to last for ever. There is nothing like a peaceful dream and good sleep.

What's Up Beat

Well yeah, I did have a dream that I did not want to wake up from. Just yesterday I had a dream I was on the outs with my lady. It was very cool cause I really miss her and I was dreaming I was holding her once again. I was very mad when staff woke me up.

Well yeah that dream I didn't want to wake up from. Well alrato. Rest in peace Rascal!

-Grumpy
From The Beat: Sometimes dreams are just so good you want to climb back into them. Hopefully you'll be back with your girl soon.

Don't Wake Me Up

Don't wake me up 'cause I'm dreaming this life I live, it's hard if you're not up on game knowing what I know and why I do what I do makes me want to do more.

This is not a game; out on the block people getting jacked, shot and even killed in the Bay. My homie, RIP Smokey, was killed about a year ago; gone but never forgotten. To all the homies that passed, see this game is not a dream, I'm already awake on my toes 'cause I'm not going to be the next one.

I got court on the 2nd, it's looking good. I'm getting me a job 'cause my mom just lost hers, so I have to, but that's something that I have to do.

-Sticky
From The Beat: We all have responsibilities—as sons, daughters, friends, and as humans—and the sooner we live up to them the better people we are. We hope you get a job and keep it, and stay out of jail so that you can carry your responsibilities.

Lack Of Love

What made me give up was lack of love but now I realize that God has a plan for my life.

I also have a beautiful baby girl to help me keep or wanna keep my head on straight. God loves me and I also should love anything or anybody.

-Lil' Ally-Bo
From The Beat: Love is pretty profound—we could think of a bunch of clichés to back us up, but we won't. We're just glad you've found it and hope you spread it in whatever way you can.

I Can't Cry No More

I can't cry no more...
My heart took enough
This won't keep goin' on
I'll die 'cause of a simple rush
We were just

We couldn't be such
Only because I needed and you wanted too much,

I showed you my trust
You showed me what I seen before
that's the main reason I won't cry no more
not over you
I can't believe I leaked and called you my boo
spent love just for me to be through
I can't, I won't cry no more
not over you.

-Mainy The Prince
From The Beat: "You showed me what I seen before" is our favorite line. This is a strong break-up poem; we all know the frustration of getting over someone with too many tears.

Creed

they creed
violences
just to feed
their needs
but now
they're running
from the needs
they creed
so ask yourself
this — why
put yourself
in a spot
where you don't have
any power
and lose your place
to a face
who's just
going about
when you could've
been
that doubt

but made you
lose
yourself

-Mien G
From The Beat: The creed of the street has greed guide your feet straight into trouble; so when you bubbled you burst and fell under the system's curse. The only thing that hurts worse is when you put your life in reverse by going back to the same old pain playing the same old game that will put you back in chains, mayne.

Little Time But It's Nada

What's up Beat and Beat readers? It's your home boy DeeCee.

Man I'm in this place doing this time for the homies, but it ain't nothing 'cause I'm gonna get out like in two weeks. I'm going to a group-home soon, I can't wait for that first home pass so I could go back to the hood.. Well, till next time Beat, I'm out for now.

-DeeCee
From The Beat: From what you write we're expecting to see you back in the halls not too long from now. Why don't you think about your situation and how to better it rather than continuing the cycle of foolishness. Watch you may think we are disrespecting, but one day you will wake up and see the reals and how much you have missed out on.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Teddy with his new baby boy. I pray you keep your head up and keep it solid for your baby's mother. I love you my ninja.

-Lil' Ally-Bo
From The Beat: Now Teddy has someone else to look after—congratulations and good luck to him. Hopefully his little one will have a dad that's present and not a dad that's hella selfish about his life, living the jailbird/street life.

Seeing The Problem

When I was little I grew up with a very low-income family and grew up around drug dealers, gang bangers, dope fiends and thugs all my life.

I grew up looking up too every one and every thing I saw, eventually ending up in the same lifestyle as I always was around.

Now I realize that it's wrong and I don't want to live this way but look at where I am at. I know I can change the cycle in my family I see. I want the next generation of my family to not end up like me and all my family before.

-Breaking The Cycle
From The Beat: The best thing to do would be to start with yourself, which is hard. But you've recognized the pattern, and now you can work against it. We wish you the best of luck and support you all the way.

The System Didn't Failed Me

Well how has society failed me. Well there is a bunch of crooked cop's out there. But I don't blame my actions and stuff I do on society. You know I accept my wrongdoing. I was the one who chose to carry a gun and now I'm in Juvenile Hall again. I've been here so many times that I forgot.

Well that's how I feel, don't blame other people or society for your wrongdoing. Take responsibility for your actions; be a man.

-Grumpy
From The Beat: It's nice that you're taking responsibility for your actions. Does that mean you're going to change those actions? You seem to recognize that you haven't been making good choices, so...where will you go from here?

Who Am I

i'm just a face
in this place
putting gee's
into my pockets
in the foulness
of the night
so be aware of me
when seeing me
roaming
in the streets

-Mien G
From The Beat: Get up off the street. Get your GED. Get a j-o-b. This isn't the way it has to be. You deserve better than all this foul weather, so get your life together.

Don't Wake Me Up

Don't wake me up, because I got it all,
I got all the money I'll need fo' the rest of my life,
I got all my fam,
I got the house that I had my eye on,
I got all the cars I need.
Every day I got a different car.
Don't wake me up, because I'm doin' it big.

-Stone Face
From The Beat: That sounds like a good dream. Just curious, why do you need a different car for every day? So what's the plan to make a bit of that dream a legit reality?

Together Forever

Damn, babe, I miss you. I want to see you. When you say, "I love you," it hurts. When I say, "I love you," I do.

When I look at you, my eyes burn. I miss doing things we did together.

I hope you wait for me, an' I'll never play you. Look at the thing you made me do.

Together forever was supposed to be you.

Never play me an' I won't play you.

Damn, I need you. You made me change my life. Thank you, babe. I know I changed your life an' you love me for that. Damn, you been there for me an' I been there for you. I love you, babe. I'll write you later.

-Mauricio B1

From The Beat: Love can hurt even when you're together, so we know it must really hurt when you can't be together. How did she make you change your life, Mauricio? What have you stopped doing that you were doing before, or started doing for the first time? What other changes do you need to make in your life so that you won't find yourself again in this situation, where you're writing beautiful, but sad, love poems to someone you can't be with?

Not Giving Up

One time when I went to court I thought I was getting out, but when I went, I did not get out. I came back to my unit with an attitude and I got room time, so everything went bad that day. But I didn't give up. I just changed my attitude and I just kept trying. But I still didn't get out, but I am not gonna give up. I am gonna keep trying and pushing forward and not going back, cha heard me?

-Young Torrell B1

From The Beat: How do you go about changing your attitude? Do you just tell yourself to change, or is there a process you go through? The most important thing you've written is that you aren't giving up, and that you are pushing forward to change. That is terrific!

I See All The Time

W'ut it be like? Every now and then I think about what my life going to be like if I don't change. I think about change a lot 'cause when I'm on the outs, I can change but if I stay in the same area the people that know about me is going to come at me the same as if I never changed.

In the halls I see my ninjas come in and out, and not just my ninjas but a lot of other people. I don't like to see my ninjas in here. I don't even like to be in here. Shhh, to keep it real, I hate it in the halls. I don't ever want to come back. The only thing is I like to eat on the block, so I'm not changing shhh unless I just say forget it, and do something other than thug livin'.

-Qbb B2

From The Beat: It seems like you are fighting a battle within yourself, one side wanting to change but the other wanting what is most familiar to you. It's obvious you know what is good for you (and what is not), and you want a successful future, but what you are not willing to let go is your block and your homies. The block may know you as one kind of person, but if your homies truly have your best interests at heart, when you tell them no, they'll understand. It's the change within you and how you deal with the people around you that matters. Be strong and we hope the "good" side wins.

When I Was Little

When I was little, I got shot with a BB gun in my ass. Then I had a cut on it. Then, when I sat down, it started burning. I was at a party and Young Torrell was giggling on them punk-ass ninjas, so they start hating and shot me in the ass.

-Young Torrell B1

From The Beat: Damn! You must have really been getting to them for someone to pick up a BB gun and shoot you with it! Once they shot you, how did they react? Has getting shot changed you? In what ways?

Fourth Time—Not Comin' Back

Man, I'm back in this weak-ass juvenile hall and I'm gettin' tired of this shhh. Ninjas do the same shhh every day, fa real, fa real. Look at it, though. W'at type a ninja wanna wear otha people drawe's and socks with stains in them? Smellin' otha dudes? That just ain't cool.

Then you ain't lookin' at no girls, but the counselors and nurses. Sometimes you see tha girls in B3, but you can't do nothin' but be in tha unit full a ninjas when you could be on the outs, gettin' some from yo' girl.

But I'ma end it like this: the goon gotta stay solid wit' it—this the fourth time and I'm not comin' back, especially fa anotha weak-ass violation just fa gettin' high. I ain't goin' out, I'm ghost.

-Rell B1

From The Beat: Well, if this is a "weak-ass juvenile hall," then how do we see you? As even weaker? After all, you gave this place the power to control you by your own decisions, knowing they could lead you back to this "weak-ass" place. Does that make you strong? Here's the deal, Solid. You can cry all you want about how terrible this place is (and believe us, we would hate to be here too), but none of those cries will change a thing in here. The only change can come from you, and unless it does come from you, you will find yourself wearing other people's dirty drawe's more and more often. Wishing it were otherwise will not make is so.

Here Goes It Again

'Sup Beat? Damn.... Here we go again. The DA is trying to send me to YA. My PO told me the most they can do is send me back to my old placement, "Boy's Republic," but he recommended for me to release so I can move away, and if not, a group home.

Well, I got court in two weeks, July 10th, 2006. I missed 4th of July, one of my favorite holidays. Well, see you guys next week. Peace out!

-Lil' E B2

From The Beat: Eric, this is Mervyn. Where do you expect them to try and send you if they gave you chance after chance? You were doing so good, then next thing anyone knows, you are back in the hall! Got out and went right back in, so what should the DA recommend? A stern lecture? A slap on the hand? Of course, we hope your PO's recommendation is the one that's followed, but if it is, we hope you cherish it for the gift that it is, and respect that gift by staying out of trouble.

Glen Mills

Today I went to court and I got played hard. They told me I gotta choose from three or four different programs, and I chose Glen Mills. I didn't know nothing 'bout this place until I got back the unit and a few of my ninjas are going. They told me about it, and I felt a little better, but I still don't wanna go that far. But it's coo'. I'ma knock this time out and change my life around and do the right thing.

-Yung Dre B2

From The Beat: Glen Mills has a good program and you can learn a lot from it if you put your heart into it. At least you had a chance to choose where you want to go. A lot of people don't get that chance, so look at the bright side. And don't disappoint yourself. (By the way, we won't print your other piece titled "Frisco" because it violates most of our writing rules.)

Listening To The Right Things

I failed the society by getting locked up. The reason was that I made and told wrong things. But when I get out, I am listening to the right things.

--Deneal B1

From The Beat: We think you already know what the right things (and wrong things) are, Deneal, and we're really happy that you've made the decision to listen to the right things when you get out. Good luck!

Society Got Me Locked Up

Society failed me by making me get locked up here in YGC. If the society didn't fail me, I would've been at home and not here in Youth Guidance Center.

Mostly everything I been through made me give up. For example, when I came here, I was fighting the battle, but it was too hard. So I gave up and ended up here at YGC.

-Gregory B1

From The Beat: What could society have given you that would have changed your life for the better? What have you done to yourself to put you here? What could society do to help you overcome some of the obstacles that still lie in your path? How do you describe "the battle" you were fighting, and what do you need to win it?

RIP Big Bra, Tro

On 10-13-05, da homie, Tro, passed away. I got a call from one of my bras. They told me the homie Tro died. I said, "For real?" He said, "I am for real." I said, "OK, bra. I am go hit you back." He said "OK, bra."

Then I called my other bra. Then he said, "Yeah." I said, "I can't do this no more." Then he said, "Me, too." And my bra, Little Chuck, and we got off the phone. Then I still could not believe that he died. Then every night, I cry. RIP, big bra, D-Tro.

-Young Jt B1

From The Beat: Each week we read about these tragic deaths, JT, and each week we shed tears for what we read. We are so sorry about your homie, Tro. When you told your other bra, "I can't do this no more," what were you thinking about? What is it you can't do any more? We hope it means you can't be part of the street life that includes killing or being killed. Tro should not have died. You should not put yourself in a position where you could follow in his footsteps. Do you plan to make any changes in your life? Like what?

Dreaming Of Freedom

I had a dream were I was with my true homies, homies that I was locked up with in B5. In my dream we were free. We were in La Rasa Park drinking MGD (Mission ganstah drink). I was with my homie Lazy, Lil' Travieso and Husky in B5. We always talked about we would be out altogether doin' it live.

I got out six months ago and we all have not been together. Husky went to a group home but failed it by being a savioso and got sent to ROP. Lil' Travieso is at Glen Mills, and Lazy... I seen him when I was out because he ran from his group home but then got caught and got sent to the Ranch and now he's in B5. And Husky is back in B5 too.

Well, as you can see the people that once had hope to be together are back where we started at juvenile hall. Now I have no hope because they're trying to send me to CYA. And for my homies, I think they're in the same kind of situation. Well I pray to God to give me another chance.

-Rt B4

From The Beat: We don't want to be too harsh, RT, but you must think God is a fool, and that you and your homies can outsmart Him. Why would He give you another chance without something in return? And what do you think God would ask from you in return for that chance you say you want? All we can see from this is a level of irresponsibility with very predictable consequences to anyone mature enough to look around the next corner and see what's coming. Maybe if you used this time to think about the changes you need to make to stay out of the system (instead of talking about getting out and "doin' it live"), you would not be feeling so hopeless right now. We fear that unless you do what you know is required for those chances you want, you will get part of your wish — being together with your homies — but it won't be out there doin' it live, it will be in here (or in somewhere much worse) doin' what you're told.

Wanted To Give Up

Man oh man, there were a whole lot of times when I was ready to give up, but somehow I never did. Man, forget society. I don't give a damn about no society. Sometimes they cool, sometimes they not. But why waste your time worrying about society?

I had a dream that I was in Jamaica doing my thing. The water was so clean. Everything was looking so clean and nice. The hotel was phat. Girls man, looking so good I know it was a dream. But like I said, I did my thang.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: If you ever want this dream to come true, it'll take some education and changing how you live. Nothing is impossible (well, maybe some things are), so as long as you are willing to work for it and put your mind to it, your dream may come true.

Guilty Feelings

I did a lot of stuff in my past. I feel very guilty for what I did this time. When I get out, I'm going to be with my family and take care of my sister.

-Ronnie B1

From The Beat: That's terrific that you want to take care of your sister, Ronnie. You can't change the past, but you can help out your family and try to make things better for them. The fact that you feel guilt for what you did is a sign that you have a conscience, and that it is speaking to you.

I'm Dreaming Of Home

A dream that I keep having is going home, getting out this place. I have dreams of being home with my family, my girl, having a good time, laughing, enjoying that am out. Then I wake up and I'm in here. The dream feels so real I don't want to be woken up.

-Cesar B4

From The Beat: We know what you mean about being sorry to wake from some dreams. But when we read all of your pieces together, it seems to us that you are waking up from a much deeper sleep, and that waking up is the best thing that ever happened to you. You will be home with your family and loved ones, and if you stay awake and alert, you can also stay out of here!

What Made Me Give Up?

When I say give up, I mean give up the street life. I been in six group homes and I'm just tired. I'm tired of not seeing my loved ones and not being able to do what I want. The main think is when I asked my PO to go to a group home that I will most likely for sure be accepted and he said no.

-Paradise B4

From The Beat: We can easily understand how you could get tired of this kind of life, where you spend so much time separated from those you love and who love you. We're not sure we understand why your PO would not allow you to go to a group home that would take you. What's his reasoning? What does he tell you? What can you do to change the picture he has of you?

I think they should just get me in a lil' program. The kind of program that I'm talking about is a program that can help me that I can go to every day.

Why I'm Back (Again)

I'm back for a dirty pee test. This is no place for me to be. People ask why I keep coming back then. I was doing good, not doing any crimes, but I had to smoke. That the only thing that messes me up. I can't stop smoking weed it's hard for me. Man that all I got to say.

-Matthew B2

From The Beat: If you want your freedom, then you'll need to learn how to give up weed, at least until you're no longer under the control of the system. Saying that it's hard to stop is different from saying that you can't stop. Of course you can, because many others have stopped before you, and if they could do it, so can you. There are programs that can help you, like NA and others, and we encourage you to try them out, but in the end it's up to you. Marijuana or freedom? Which is more important to you?

How Has Society Failed Me?

Society got a ninja tangled up right now. Here I am in here just sitting, you feel me? My PO came up to me the other day and said go to the Ranch for one year. I look at that ninja like he was crazy. I did not commit a crime. Then you got my so-called attorney trying to send me to places like group homes. But every time I ask her, she say, "No, I am not saying that." She's lying to me so how I feel is to hell with society an' everybody in it.

-Dg B4

From The Beat: When you say you didn't commit a crime, do you mean that you took the rap for someone else's crime? If so, how can the system know that you are the innocent one? If you did take the rap, it means that you are playing the system just as much as the system is playing you. You can say to hell with society, but unfortunately, you can't live like that. Society is what you live in, and there are ways to live in it without risking your freedom. We hope you find those ways.

Bad Dreams

Every night I have a dream that I get killed, so every day I wake up thinking I'm going die. Every day I talk to my mother. She says she has dreams that I get killed and seeing me in a casket. So every day I tell my mother I love her before I leave, thinking and knowing every day is not promised. I guess I got to stop living the life of a young thug ninja. Stop what chu doing before it's too late, that's what I got out those dream.

-Eric B2

From The Beat: That must be a horrible to wake up to and a terrible feeling to deal with. We agree with you that what you're dreaming is telling you to stop before it's too late, but we worry when we read, "I guess I got to stop..." What are you guessing about?

Society Failed Me

Society has failed me because I was out there doing the wrong things that I shouldn't have, like smoking, popping pills and selling drugs. Man, all that was gone do was lead me either hurt or some messed up. I think they should just get me in a lil' program. The kind of program that I'm talking about is a program that can help me that I can go to every day.

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: What do you have in mind Lil' Shorty? Have you tried talking to your PO or attorney about placing you somewhere where you can get help with your problems (drugs or whatever that may be)? Remember, "Closed mouths don't get fed." If you want something, ask for it. If society has failed you, what could society have done for you that would have helped you succeed?

It's Me Again

What's with it? It's me again in the hall for some bull. But I not even trippin' because I already know I going to a group home. But it's cool. I'm not trippin'. I just wanna do my time like a real man. I know I did wrong, but I got to take my responsibility.

-M B2

From The Beat: What we don't understand is why people keep coming back to a place they say they hate? Or a place where they say they don't belong? If you hate it, if you don't belong, then why are you here? It may be for some "bull," but it's bull that you knew could lead you to give up your freedom once again. Now, that's bull!

When A Gun Is In My Hand

What made me give up on life is when I put the gun in my hand. I said forget my life when I put rocks in my hand. I said forget my life when they sold me all that shhh. I sold my soul to the devil when I put that shhh in my hand. I'm in YGC gettin' off on ninjas messin' up my hand. Life's a cold game and I'm playing to win. They call me Bee Boppa, mad as hell. When I'm in jail it's like I'm not livin'.

-Bee Boppa B2

From The Beat: If you're playing this cold game to win, we'd like to know what your definition of winning is. You listed the things that describe the life you've chosen, and the well-known consequence for any and all of those things is the loss of freedom, here or somewhere else. So you've made the very choices that have led you to be where you feel like you're not even living! We can understand why you're mad as hell... but who are you mad at?

What Made You Give Up?

Right now that I'm up in here for da seventh time, and I'm looking at probably going to Glen Mills. It makes me wanna give up the lifestyle that got me here. Not only that, but I got a lil' one on da way, so it's a must that I give up this lifestyle and get my shhh together to be in my baby's life, feel me

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: Yes, we feel you! If you are about to become a father, then your only choice is to be a responsible one — or else you will just be creating the next generation of prisoners. Children need their fathers to guide them. So guide yourself up out of here and into a lifestyle that allows you to remain with your child and be the father he needs.

My Dream

Once I had a dream that I got stabbed, and a week later I get stabbed. From there on I trusted my dreams.

-Ej B4

From The Beat: Did getting stabbed make you change anything else besides your trust in dreams? Did it make you think that maybe there's more to life than what you thought?

Dreaming Of Graduating High School

The first time I got locked up, like about da third week that I was in here, I had a dream that I was on the outs doing w'at I usually do on a regular basis or what not. But I had graduated from H.S. in my dream, and I seen my whole family. They were all looking at me smiling. They was happy 'cause I was the only one that completed school. But my door opened and I woke up. I would've wished that my dream would've been really happened. But I messed up!

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: We all mess up sometimes, Lil' Nicoya. Don't let that become your excuse for not making this dream a reality. Just remember how happy your family was to see that you had graduated high school, and let that memory inspire you to do just that.

Positive Get Back

Money, hustling, and fame is a part of the game,
You either eat or get killed it's a part of a change it
It's da movie of street and a life in a cinemax
I'm still young just done from drinking dat Similac
So I'm giving back, but it just ain't crack
Staying positive now is my only get back
And with that get back I'm guaranteed a big stack

-Quad B2

From The Beat: Nobody is "guaranteed a big stack" unless they were born into it, and we know nobody in that class. So, what's your plan for that stack you hope to have — and what will you do if it doesn't materialize?

A Messed Up Dat

Que onda Beat, y saludos a todos los homies en lo torcida. (What's happening Beat, and greetings to everyone in jail.) This that crazy vato, Goofy. Bueno.

Today I'm having a messed up day and it's tripping me out. I've been here three months and for these months I've been trying not to think of my life on the outside. Usually when a thought comes to mind or a memory pops up I quickly try and think about something else so that I don't trip off the outs and stress. But today for some reason all I'm thinking about is the outs. And it's tripping me the hell out! I guess that's the reason I'm writing this piece.

Well, changing the subject, it's funny to me how these chavalas talk all that bullshhh behind a locked door knowing we can't touch them. Damn, they talk so much shhh people would think they are hardcore gang members. That's just funny to me 'cause truth is they are trying to make a reputation with words and trying to play a game without knowing the rules. So you know they are gonna lose.

Well, I gotta cut it short 'cause off to the box I go. To all doin' time, much love and respect from Goofy. Keep trucha y alrato

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: First, it's good to know that you feel comfortable using The Beat to vent your frustrations and stress. We invite you to let it all out on our pages. But second, we're wondering exactly what you have in mind when you look down on the wanna-be gang members, the "losers" who substitute words for deeds "without knowing the rules." Now, it's pretty clear that you do know the rules of the game, that you aren't just talking gang banging, but you're actually living it — and yet, here you are, a slave just like all the others! Is that what you mean by winning?

Dreaming Of Freedom

I can remember one dream I was in here in jail dreaming of me at home with my family, my girl watching TV waiting for my mom to finish cooking dinner, and me and my girl cupcaking, hugging and kissing, rubbing her stomach trying to feel my son kicking, and playing with my brother outside driving in my box on 22". You can't lose with the four 12's slapping. And then I woke up in here in jail mad as hell, and I wish that dream was true right then and there.

-Dre Doojah B5

From The Beat: We hope you keep this sweet dream in your head as a kind of ideal picture to achieve in your life. Even if that dream could not come true "right then and there," it is worth working toward that future. We hope you have more sweet dreams, and that they come true.

Ten Times In YGC

What's making me give up is that I have been in YGC for ten times. The first time I had got sent here, I thought it was a game and I did not take it very real. I look back on how I was doing in life, I was working with The Center, was getting sent to New York. Now I am in here thinking on my life and how I messed up. Man, it hurts.

I wish that I could take back the hands of time and have a change, but when I get back from my group home I'm going to be on my shhh even harder. This is a test in my life. I could help young people in my life because I have been through it all. Now I look back on my life and see what I have been through and what I'm going through. It's a test in my life.

-Lil' Mika GU

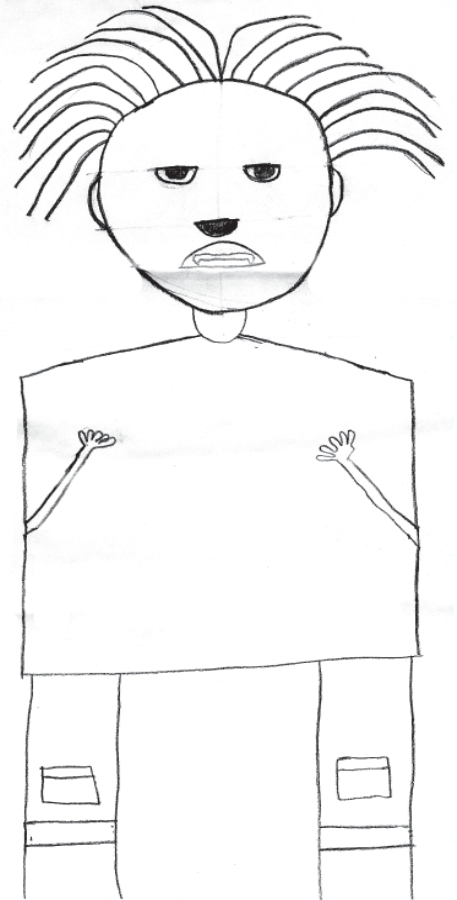
From The Beat: Yes, this is a test and to pass this test in life you'll have to be determined to change and be willing to accept help from people on your journey to change. Some people might look at the fact that you've been here ten times and conclude that you like it here... Do you? You're right, there is a lot you can teach to those coming behind you based on what you've learned through your experiences. We hope to see you pass this test.

Options

What made me give up was when I was given choices. The first choice was to accept/admit all charges for one strike on my record. The other was if I fight it, I will get two strikes if I lose the case. So I just said forget it, I'll take the strike. It's ok though, 'cause I'm not gonna give up in life. They could try to keep Cito down but Cito is always coming up, 'specially on da 'dro. Cito out

-Cito B4

From The Beat: What are the chances that Cito can build on his months of sobriety when he's on the outs? We don't know why you're so obsessed with getting back to smoking marijuana when you've already done the hard part about quitting (which is always hardest at first). Oh well...



... today for
some reason all
I'm thinking about
is the outs. And it's
tripping me
the hell out!

Explaining My Poem

I'm just answerin' your questions from the issue 11.23. Yes, the marigold poem. It's about me an' my mom. Well, I don't know w'at to say about my mom 'cause I wouldn't know how to express myself. But I can tell you that she is my everything. She's my brown queen, an' yeah, she grieves a lot that I'm locked up. Well my brothers are sad that I'm in here.

Babys love, I'ma be back from being among the missing in about a year, and no, nothing that I do that keep me away from my family is worthy.

Invisible thizz is w'at the last stanza means. Whenever I'm locked up staff an' my fellows inmates can see my physically, but they can't see my mentally or spiritually. So that's why I can be seen by those who cannot see me.

Hundred acre 'hood... Well, w'at can I say? I'm loyal to the game...

Father's redemption... Well, I was on the run so my time to get locked up was gon come in any second, an' my mom is helping my BM with my sons.

Well, when I get out I'ma start my own carpet cleaning business so I could give my son everything. I already got the money to start my business. I got like around twelve G's in the bank.

-Lil' Lazy B5

From The Beat: It's hard for us to follow your explanation without the original poem in front of us, but we still appreciate your explanation. We appreciate even more your commitment to providing a decent life for your son through a legitimate business. At the same time, Lil' Lazy, karma has a way of biting you on the ass when you least expect it, so if those 12 G's you have saved up were gotten illegally (how else?), don't be surprised if things don't work out as smoothly as you have them planned.

Real Dreams

I hate when I have a dream about me going shopping, buying a whole lot of clothes and shoes and when I wake up I don't have none of the clothes I dream I did. 'Cause when I look in my closet I have the same clothes I had when I went to sleep. And another thing about my dreams when I go to sleep dreaming, I be dreaming that I'm on my stomping grounds chilling with all my friends. It feels so real and when I wake up I be right in room #6. I hate those types of dreams when they just feel so real and I have them so often.

-Wallace GU

From The Beat: Of course, some of the things you did out there in your "stomping grounds" led you here, so we hope when you get out — and you will — you don't go back to the same things as before. If you do, you can expect the same consequences as before. Remember, you are the only one that can make these dreams come true — as long as you stay out of trouble.

My Big Brothers

I know I had a lot of lovely dreams, but you know them lovely dreams ain't the ones you remember. It seems like all the dreams I remember are all bad. The meanest dream I ever had is when I dreamed about my big brothers gettin' killed. In my dream, I didn't know what to do. I didn't even want to live no more. Everybody was cryin' and hurt.

I won't talk about the whole dream 'cause it take forever, but I haven't only dreamed about my big brothers getting killed one time. I had a few dreams about it, and I hated my dreams and wanted to wake up from them. I never hope to dream this type of shhh again. I love my big brothers to death. I wouldn't know what to do if my dreams came true. I don't ever want this to happen.

-Muck GU

From The Beat: Let's cross all our fingers and hope that your dreams are just dreams, and nothing more. Is there something specific about the way your brothers are livin' their lives that puts you in such fear? Why do you think that you don't remember your good dreams?

Why My Life Not Right

Why my life is not right
Every day and night I ask why
Why my bra had to be the one to die
I cry and I cry wishing I could die
Knowing deep down inside I want to be alive
On my first birthday, my grandma died
And every night I ask God why
Knowing I shouldn't question my Lord but I
wanted to know why
Why my life is not right. My mother is not
here with me

I wonder if she's still on the streets
My mother is my lover and my best friend
I really don't need no man or no friends
People so phony, I don't know what to think
But to think everyone is against me
Why, oh why my life is not right
Someone please help me. I feel like I'm
about to die

Money is the power to all evil. We all love to
have money, people play dice
In the beginning, you winning and in the
end you lose yo' dividends and up fighting
Yo' best friend trying to rob him 'cause you
just lost yo' dough

But remember it was just a dice game
So who's the one to blame is it him
Or you think twice before you take his life
with that gun
Remember once he's gone, no more fun
Just mo' money in you' pockets
But you lost one of your closest homies to
some punk-ass money man
Just think this is my homie, all this punk-
ass shhh is phony
That why I say you can't trust no one, not
even yo' best friend
Just ask God why... why do I want to take
his life
This is not right, why oh why my life is not
right

-Ladiamond GU

From The Beat: We're sorry about how your life seems to you, Ladiamond, but so much of it is through your own choices. Of course, your grandmother's death is a natural thing, something that will happen to all of us and, if you believe in God, should not be such a sad thing since she lived a full life as God planned. But when people your age are dying in the streets, that is not according to the natural law and there is good reason to ask, "Why?" Do you have any answers? Is there anything you can do about this picture that you hate so much, or are you just a passenger on a journey with no control whatsoever? You life might be not right now, but that doesn't mean you can't make it right. Whatever's waiting for you is something you're going to have to decide.

My Grandma

I wanted to give up when my grandmother told me that if I didn't have an abortion that I couldn't live with her. I really like livin' with my grandma and that really made me wanna give up.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: Whatever you think about abortion, you had the responsibility to protect yourself from unwanted pregnancy as well as other possible consequences of unprotected sex, including STDs like AIDS. You have to take some responsibility for your life, and your grandmother was trying to tell you that the fact of your pregnancy proved you were not ready for that responsibility. Think about it.

Dreamin'

I remembered I was dreaming. I was dreamin' that I was on the outs and I was walkin' down the street. My friends were talking to me and we were kickin' it, just smokin' and drinkin' and it felt so real. But when I woke up I was still in jail.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: We can understand why you'd dream about this kind of freedom when you're locked up, but we wish you'd spend a little less time dreaming about drinking and smoking and a little more time dreaming about things that can actually help keep you out of places like this — things like school, for example. (Also, The Beat would prefer if you chose just one topic to write about instead of all three. When you're only able to write a couple of sentences on each topic, you cheat us from knowing who you are.)

Going To My Group Home

Well today at The Beat I'm just chillin' writing about w'at I'm thinking about. I should be going to my group home any day now, and I can't wait 'cause I been here too long... 70 days just doin' my time.

But I'm going through it, though. Just takin' all this pain I'm going through. I just miss the family of mines, wishin' I can be with them. But I can't 'cause the system always playing us by sending us to group homes and places where we don't want to be. Well I really want to do my group home but when you are out, you free, you can go to the fast life or easy life or slow life and get a real job or just sell dope.

But that's how life is sometimes you know. That's why I hate life sometimes 'cause it be so hard. All I need is some help with my program 'cause I'm going to want to run but hopefully I don't you know, 'cause I need to change my life for real.

-Lil' Shadow, SF GU

From The Beat: Thanks for keeping it real, Lil' Shadow. The free life is tempting and a lot of people fall back into the halls because of these temptations. Just remember two things: First, the help you're looking for might be waiting for you at that group home if you keep an open mind about it, and Second, when you run you are only running back to the hall! Be determined to change, and you can resist these temptations to fall back into your old ways that haven't served you very well up to now. You can do it.

Look Into My Eyes

Look in to my eyes and tell me w'at you see
People see a criminal, but I say, "Damn it, let me be"
People judge me 'cause of the clothes I wear
They see me in the streets and they get scared
Some judge me 'cause of the things I do
I can't do nothing about it 'cause it's the life I choose
People's judgments got me thinkin' day and night
Got me saying to myself, "Why can't I do shhh right?"
All I could do is pray to God for another day
But I'm never thinking about changing ma ways.

-Payaso B2

From The Beat: You say you "can't do nothing" about the life you live "cause it's the life I choose." So, if you choose it, why can't you do anything about it? We also object to people making judgments based on the way people look or the clothes they wear. But judging people by what they do seems fair to us. How should you be judged? If God were judging you, what would that judgment be? When you pray to God for another day, does the quality of that day matter to you? Do you think the quality of that day — how you live it — matters to God?

When I Was Little

When I was little I never thought I would be in this predicament. I started coming to the halls when I first was a teen for minor things. Now I'm 17 and I've been locked up for one and a half years going from the halls to facilities and coming back. My PO is sending me to ROP in Nevada and he's putting a YA commitment on me because there is no other program that will accept me. The Mills turned me down and I've already been to several lock-up facilities.

-Smokey Malo B4

From The Beat: This piece only makes us want to know more. Why did the Mills turn you down? What would you have to change about your life to be acceptable to a program like that? Could you have done anything differently from the time you first got locked up to now to change the picture? Can you do anything from this day forward to change the picture?

Not In The Beat

What do I do after The Beat?
I got to go to my cell
Like I am up in hell
But it is good
'Cause soon I be back up in my 'hood
But I can still not believe that I still not up in the
beat
But you already know who this be
Young Hitta
But it is good because I won't be back
I bet you that

-Young H GU

From The Beat: We would never bet against you on this one. If we took that bet, all we'd want to do is lose it. So, we're putting our money where your mouth is: Never come back!

Got Played

What it do, what the beat?
You already know who this be
Your girl, Young Hitta
But what's good, let me tell you how my PO played
me
I should be out doing me
But as you know my PO think that I am going to
go out to be back to the beef
But you know now I got to step up to the plate
And go to my group home and do what I got to do
So people can let me speak
So I won't to go back out and be back and the beef
Because that is not for me
So I am going to do what I got to do
So he will let me be
All right then Beat

-Young H GU

From The Beat: What are the specific changes your planning to make in your life to show your PO that you're not what he expects you to be? What are you going to do to prove him and the system wrong about you? How will you be a changed person?

All I need is some
help with my program
'cause I'm going to
want to run

What Is Thizz?

W'at thizz it? Y'all already know who thizz is, Lil' Lazy back up in thizz hole. It's been a couple of weeks since last time I wrote for The Beat. I think y'all already know I bounce from the Ranch 'cause I was tired of all them snitch-ass ninjas. Well, I got to be wit' a female after four months wit'out one, ya feel me? I got to be wit' the fam too. I got to be on the block every day that I was out, thizzin', drinkin', smokin' an' makin' the money too.

I had the chance to do some dirt, feel me? I also got shot in my hand, but it's nothing. I got shot an' I didn't even go to the hospital 'cause I was on the run, but my boy had the chance to be a doctor for one day. Put some salt an' some Henny on the wound.

Then the next day got chased by the boys. They got mad 'cause one of them almost had me but I shook him an' I left him on the ground. But two blocks down they had the whole street blocked. I try to hop a fence but they got me so they whopped my ass 'cause I made them run. But it ain't nothing.

-Lil' Lazy B5

From The Beat: Sounds like you had quite an adventure — and now you're back to being a slave. Get used to it, because unless you grow — and fast — this is the world you're going to get very familiar with. And if you think this place stinks, and if you can't handle the Ranch, you're in for a shock when you get to the places they have waiting for you. Your "thizzin', drinkin', smokin' an' makin' the money" is what is keeping you from maturing from childhood to young adulthood. It's time. It's past time.

changed

When I was lil' I was outside with my cousin, never in the house with moms or with grandmother. Me and my cousin was bad and in out of here. But I slowed down and started being good and doing what I wanted to do, that's playing basketball going to school and making up my grades.

-Taylor B2

From The Beat: What happened, Taylor? You were doing good, playing basketball and going to school, so what did you do again to end up back in the halls? Whatever it was, you can't say you don't know what you have to do — or stop doing — to stay out of here, can you? Let this be the last visit for you to this place, all right?

Younger Than I Act

People tell me that I look and act older than I am, and you know what? I am. But sometime I don't I make choices like an older, respectful and trusting man.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: We would love for you to explain his short but meaningful piece with several examples. When have you made choices reflecting maturity, and when have you made choices that would not be made by "an older, respectful and trusting man"?

Dreaming I'm Not Here

Sometimes when I dream that I'm not here, I wish that I never wake up. But I do and I don't like that. I wish some of my dreams came true. Not all of them, because sometimes I have some mainy-ass dreams.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Only you can make those good dreams come true, Cito. How are you planning to do that?

Don't Wake Me Up 'Cause I'm Dreaming!

I recall when I was dreaming about me and ma homies chillin' in the jets, just haven fun talkin' 'bout girls, money and some other stuff. Then we went to this party nearby. When we got into the party, we enjoyed ourselves. After, some guys start shooting an' hit one of my homies. He passed right away. I had this dream about two times. It was like I lived that day again, but only in my head.

No, I would not want to dream this again because it gets to me in a way.

-Daron B2

From The Beat: Of course you don't want to dream this again. It's damn scary! Don't you think this frightening dream is trying to tell you something? Could it be a warning about your lifestyle? Maybe if you try changing the way you live, dreams like this will go away.

Don't Wake Me Up 'Cause I'm Dreaming!

Man I had this fat-ass dream about me blowing up this rap. Shhh blood, I had a mansion that

I took the homies to. We was blowin' fat 'dro while we was in the studio in my spot. Me and my bra Nitro (may he rest in peace) was in the other room wit' so me females doin' you know w'at I'm talking 'bout. But in the dream it was like bra had never died in that shhh. Hella crazy, B, but I guess God needed another angel. Then we left the spot, got in my scraper on duces and scraped the city.

Then once it got real good, you hear somebody opening your door telling you time to brush yo' teeth and wash yo' face. Then you be like, "Damn!"

But I'm out, but see ya when you scrape through next week.

-Al Bundy B5

From The Beat: What do you mean "once it got real good" someone wakes you up. It sounded pretty good when you and Nitro (RIP) were in the next room doing your thang... Have you ever had a dream that later came true?

I Woke My Ass Up

I was dreaming about me and my girl. I took her out to dinner and I took her back to her house. Then we start kissing by the door, then her mom came out and told her to get in the house, so she went to the window and opened it up. I hopped in, and the rest is to be continued.

I woke my ass up—that's why I didn't finish it.

-Maurice B1

From The Beat: The worst part of dreams like this, Maurice, is waking up and finding out it was just a dream! Has the reverse ever happened? Have you ever been out in the free world sleeping in your own bed and dreaming you were locked up? The best part of dreams like that is waking up and finding out it was just a dream!

Based On Description

This time I went to juvenile when the police picked me up on a description... and this time I didn't commit the crime. Now I'm sitting in juvenile and not knowing when I will be able to go home.

If I was to lose a close homie or family member, I wouldn't give up. I would be angry, because I would want to find out who killed that person. Sometimes I felt like giving up in juvenile, because they won't tell you how long you have to do and then they release you at the least time you expect.

-Marquise B2

From The Beat: Is it harder to do the time when you're actually guilty of what they say, or is it easier when, like now, you are not guilty? We know the system makes big mistakes (not all the time), so how did this one happen?

Never Dreams, Only Nightmares

I can't remember having a dream ever... only nightmares. But I do remember a dream once when I went to sleep "under the influence," (which I've been told may be the cause of my nightmares). Me and my girlfriend were high, and we were in outer space in a pod racer on a double date with Anakin Skywalker and Padmé doing doughnuts and going dumb in the parking lot of a Kwik-e-mart on Mars.

-Dscott B4

From The Beat: Damn! You really must have been flying high! Now, tell us why this dream was a nightmare? It sounds kind of fun to us.

Every Day I Cry

Every day I cry and why
'Cause every day someone I love die
To a gun or a knife sometimes a fight
Every day I cry wishing my mom was by my side
Wishing I could go home and never be too alone
Every day I cry and cry
Up here in juvenile these punk-ass bitches females testing my patience
I had to teach a couple of females a lesson
I bet they think twice
Before they get to disrespecting me
Now not to get heify but as the day go by
I cry and I cry
Hoping I survive up
This place make me want to die
So I just pray to God and I know He's with me
And I stay thinking about my Daddy Cali
Yeah that ninja a young pimp getting his dip
I cry and I cry wishing I was by his side
Popping a pill, smoking that 'dro
Or drinking some poutoma
Now I'm gone out my body dancing and having fun
I cry and I cry
I want to go home
someone help me
I feel all alone

-Ladiamond GU

From The Beat: Like the "n" word, The Beat doesn't allow you to use the "b" word to describe other females. To us, that is hate-filled word that has no place in our pages. You said you cry every day because someone you love dies. Well, there are other people out there that love you who are crying too because you are wasting your life away with drugs in the streets. Think about it. Going home is something that will occur, but staying home is up to you.

Society Who

Society is messed up no matter how far you go
You try to do the right thing and you still called a menace
So society is a word that really reeks like a dentist
So society, what society? We living life scavengers
And the people who say they leading really riding, like passengers
Now who's going to take the place of so-called society and such
When ya moms hate ya thinking life just ain't much,
You start reaching for your crutch and think is life worth living
Then you see it's juvenile you got life worth giving

-Quad B4

From The Beat: Can you give us some examples of trying to do the right thing, but still getting called a menace? Scavengers eat what others create. What would you like to create in the world instead of scavenging?

Is It In Your Blood?

I don't feel like a gangster
I feel like a hustler and streets soldier
I feel like a person with great leadership
I feel like I changed that from my family

-D-M B1

From The Beat: Feeling like a hustler can be a good thing, depending on what you are hustling. What are the leadership skills you have, and how are you putting them to use? When you look forward, how do you see your life in the future being different from your family's life in the past?

Keepers And Kept

When I was little I would play wit' my rabbit until it died of old age. Then I got a Guinea pig. I killed it, 'cause it bit me. It was funny, because when I socked it and it started to shriek real loud and it died. And I killed a fly because it was in my room. Pow!

-JaQuan B1

From The Beat: We're not quite sure how to respond to this, JaQuan, but we'll just keep it real: when you write that you thought it was funny to hear your Guinea pig "shriek real loud" and die after you hit it, we are truly disgusted! This tiny little animal should not have been your pet in the first place because you obviously do not know that people who take in animals have a special responsibility to them. You should truly understand what it means to be in a cage totally dependent on your keeper for food, for shelter, for warmth and for safety. Should your "big" counselors react to you when you act out the way you reacted to your imprisoned pet? We're sorry your pig bit you, but we're even sorrier about your reaction to it. The next time you feel like you want a pet, read a little about that pet's needs and how to take care of it. Abusing animals is a sign that you have a lot of growing up to do!

My Time In YGC

When I first entered the door it was like my freedom was took away. I did the 24 hours the first day and it sucked.

-No Name B4

From The Beat: What do you mean, "it was like" your freedom was taken away. Your freedom WAS taken away, and although you'll get it back, it's up to you whether you'll be able to hold onto it or not.

Ain't Gone Be Nothin'

Man, what made me kinda want to give up is I keep coming back up here. I was like, "Man, I'm not gone be nothing. I'm not goin make it to be nobody in life. But don't got nothing else to say.

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: Coming back here is a sad fact, but it's not a promise of your future. That's in your hands. You'll only be a nobody if you let it happen. You know what you have to do (or to stop doing) in order to stay out of here, but clearly, knowledge is not enough. You have to want something different, you have to want to be somebody in life, decide what that is, make a plan to get there, and then follow your plan. Never give up no matter how hard life can be.

When I Was Little...

When I was little, life was harder for me than it is now, so I'm glad to be a lil' older so I can handle changes and hard times in my life that go on. Also, when I was little I didn't have that much "smarts" to make right decisions to lead my life correctly. But it's ok. I guess it was meant to happen. I make decisions now in my life, I'm older.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Basically, what you've described is a process that all of us go through. The experiences we have as children, and the choices we make — the good ones that lead to things we want, and the bad ones that lead to things we don't want — are what shapes us as adults.

Snitches

Wow! These ninjas be talkin'
Like it's no tomorrow
They mouths be run' like hot water
That all I could say
Stay out the way
But still ready to get down
Oh, hold on
They might snitch on me
What it do?
Leave you with that note

-Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: What's with the epidemic of snitching? Snitching and incarceration go hand and hand we suppose? On the outs isn't there a code of honor that says that you don't even snitch on those you dislike? Why are so many of you willing to go to the counselors and tell on the other guys? Is there ever a time when you think it's right to snitch aka tell? Please explain.

Good Times, Bad Times

I've had the bad times
It's time for the good
I'm gonna change my life

-Marina GU

From The Beat: You've figured out the most important lesson there is: you make your own times, good or bad. We're glad you're tired of making bad times, and we are squarely behind you in your decision to make some good ones. It's time.

The Weather Man

You know Weather Man
So if you are a girl
You can read this
It the Weather Man
You know me
There to get money
If you got money
Come see me!

-Weather Man LCRS

From The Beat: You wrote that you call yourself Weather Man because you're out there in all kinds of weather, but what you hint that you do out there sounds ominous. Would you want another Weather Man to get money selling what you sell to your sister? Would you sell whatever your product is to your sister? Mother? Wake up and show respect!

Society

Yeah, society failed me. When I used to be livin' with my daddy, he had start sexually abusing me and physically abusing. That was really painful 'cause people would see the abuse and wouldn't help me.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: What your father did to you is not only the biggest betrayal a parent can hand to a child, it is also a crime. What could society have done to protect you from his abuse? We hope there are professional people you can talk to about this (psychologists? counselors? teachers?) because there can be long-term consequences if you bottle this up. Where is your father now?

SANTA CRUZ

when I woke up, it made me sad — to remember where I was. There was something awkward about it, that I knew I was still in an institution.

A Piece Of A Dream

I remember a little bit of a dream I had a few nights ago. This dream seemed so real, and it made me happy. But when I woke up, it made me sad — to remember where I was. There was something awkward about it, that I knew I was still in an institution. I remember walking down the street in my neighborhood, everyone in juvenile hall following me in single file. Staff members were in front and behind the line. Everyone was so happy, playing.

-Nathaniel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully written Nathaniel. And how neat that everyone was happy.

You Can Do Anything You Want To

Keep your head up.
Never let anybody put you down.
Keep your head up.
Don't waste your time.
Keep your head up.
Don't let anybody lie.
And keep your head up.
Whatever you do, keep it legit.
Keep your head up
and stay up on your shhh.

-Christina

From The Beat: Interesting advice. Just make sure, every now and then, that you know where you're walking. Watch out for banana peels on the sidewalk and for other stuff.

I Had Become A Fiend

When I was little
About the age of ten
I took my first hit of weed
Right after that I knew
I had become a fiend
Smokin' blunts back-to-back
Right after that
We got another fat
Bowl to pack
Chillin' with friends
Stand out my mind
I don't wanna come down
It's too fun to be high
I wanna be baked
For the rest of my life

-Heather

From The Beat: You're honest about what drugs mean to you, Heather, but you also seem to be writing that being do dependent on them scares you profoundly. Whoever introduced you to drugs wasn't doing you any favors. Now that you're in juvy and away from drugs, do you feel more normal without them or do you feel insecure and/or needy? Do you think you'd benefit from a drug program? If so, can you talk to the med tec in juvy and set one up for yourself? It seems like you're asking for help with drugs. If so, please be sure to get it now!

I Failed Myself

The only way society has failed me is by having such a leisurely pace at handling things. With all the trials and retrials, I'm serving a twelve-day sentence at the end of June for throwing parties back in December.

Probation makes it literally impossible for anyone to live like a normal teenager. With ten o'clock curfew and throwing parties being a violation, I now have to spend twelve days of my vacation with kids who shoot people and steal cars for fun. Probation is a punk, but I guess I failed myself.

-Xavier

From The Beat: When you take responsibility for whatever you've done, you're starting to grow up. Going to juvy is a hard place to learn any lessons, but if it's impressed upon you that you don't ever want to have to go back there, it's done its job, don't you think? Lastly, don't blame probation, you made some poor choices along the way to find your way on probation.

I Don't Care

Sitting in my room, mind blacked out
Wishing that they turn these damn lights out
I ain't trippin', I'm just doing my thang
Staff getting on my nerves
But I gotta maintain
Talking 'bout, "We taking points"
Man, do what you do
And take me to my room
Before I flash on you
Now I got an EBT
On my way to TRG
In my room all day
But it's nothing to me
They call me Dumb Dude
And I do
The fool in a party
Hitting the drop
Because I'm so damn coo'

-Dumb Dude

From The Beat: You know, how you behave in juvy has a lot to do to where you get sent, like to placement, whether you go home, etc., Dude. It may be more than aggravating to have counselors pulling power trips on you, but face it, they have the power now. You can feed their power by getting in their faces, or you can cooperate insofar as you think they are being respectful and reasonable, and get out of there. What will it be?

He

He is my soul, my heart, my thoughts, my life
He is cute, smart, sweet, funny
He is tall, five something, ain't skinny or fat,
black, that's hot
He's got his hair done; I wish he had dreads
He is in the halls for a crime, ain't trippin'
'Cause I know he didn't do it
He knows I love him
I also know he loves me
But if he don't, I ain't trippin'
He don't smoke—that's good
When we get out
I wish we stay together for long
(Dedicated to James)

-Lil' Foot

From The Beat: Whether or not the guy you're writing about is with you in juvenile, we would appreciate you slowing down on giving us these sappy love letters. The Beat is not about you sending love letters to your lover. We don't mind love poems, but write the poem/thought in a way all of us could embrace. If you want your special person to know about your feelings towards him/her send the letter directly!

So Tired

Tired of being here
Tired of being told what to do
Told when to eat an' sleep!

-Nomu

From The Beat: So if you really want to be somewhere else, to be able to tell yourself what to do, what to eat and when to sleep, what are you willing to do or stop doing, so you can run your own life?

What Made Me Give Up?

I think my main reason I'm in here is because I had too many thoughts in my mind, like my girl just wanted to smoke, so I can try to get stuff off my mind. I could not believe my eyes when I saw—fat flames from a fire they tried to blame me for, and I did not want to give up my rights, so I resisted arrest and it brought me here. So, to my girl, you're still on my mind

-Lil' L

From The Beat: It's not smart to discuss the details of a pending case, but when you have too many thoughts going through your mind at once, do you get confused and panic? When this happens, what can you do to slow yourself down so you can think straight? When someone, including your girlfriend, wants to do something you don't want to do or don't approve of, how do you handle it? Do you ever tell her "No!"?

Dream

One time I was dreamin' I was out chillin' wit' my ninjas. Posted at the house like old times. But, then I heard the keys tappin' on doors and sayin', "Y'all is comin' out, get ready for..." I was hella mad and then it was like, "Whatever, it's nothing." I get out someday.

-Perry

From The Beat: Do you ever learn anything about life, even your own life, that you didn't already know, from your dreams? Do you ever dream that you're living another life, other than your life hanging with your homies, posted...? Do you ever wake-dream about creating another life for yourself that wouldn't include anything that would bring you back into juvy? In your imagination, what would that life be like for you?

I Dreamed I Went To Disneyland

When I was in Disneyland, I was hanging out with Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, Minnie Mouse and then I woke up in juvenile hall.

-Jadian

From The Beat: So have you ever been to Disneyland? It really is a magical kingdom. Everyone loves going to Disneyland. Hope you get there soon.

Nothing Like The Bay Area

When I read The Beat in my room, I look at all of the different counties that write in it. It's hella funny to me, because I have been to the Durango Juvenile Hall last summer when I was in Arizona. My biological mom lives there with my family. When I went there I got into so much bullshhh and that's when I started using crystal. Anyways, I like Arizona. It's chill, but they don't know nothin' about "The Bay."

I was born and raised all around the Bay. I have lived in San Mateo, Redwood City, Daly City, San Francisco and now Marin. It's hella different here and when I moved here from Redwood City, I thought there were a bunch of squares down here, but ever since I moved here, it's been nothing but trouble, for reals.

This is my thirteenth time in this juvenile hall. Anyways, I miss Redwood and all the heads I know down there. You're all in my thoughts and prayers every day. Para siempre, mi hija. One love.

-Careina

From The Beat: Have you figured out why you're so willing to jeopardize any continuity in your life by messing up and coming back to juvy so often, Careina? Is it just the crystal? What's missing in your life, that makes the life you've created for yourself so insubstantial, that you're willing to risk it all whenever something seemingly thrilling beckons you? What do you need in your life, that you'd be willing to nurture, defend, help it to grow, to create a life you'd be proud of, that would keep you free?

Out

I'm out doin' my thang.
Keepin' my game tight and gettin' the girls.
W'en I'm comin' around yo' block, I'm ready for shhhh.
Just steady strollin' with my homies,
ready to lock a blunt.
Just kickin' with homies on the block.
W'en my homies get out, we posted, just chillin',
waiting for some shhhh to go down.
When shhh gets poppin', we get it crackin'.
Especially w'en girls be around,
game comes out, like wind blowin' hundreds of mph.

-Playa Joey

From The Beat: Playa Joey, this is called rhetoric. How many times, in our discussions, have we mentioned that we don't want to hear about how any of you hang on the corner, posted, bla bla bla? How many guys in juvy do you think could have written some version of this? You have a good mind and an active imagination. What's going on in your life? Your heart? Have you ever tried writing your guts out?

I'm Dreaming!

I dream that I got out and that my friend, Diabla, broke up with her boyfriend and that I asked her to be my lady. Next day I get released and she asks me out.

-Dice

From The Beat: Is this true? You dreamed that Diabla broke up with her boyfriend and in real life she did? And she asked you out? Did you go out with her? Did you tell her about your dream? If so, how did she respond?

I Did It

I don't know. The only person I am is 'cause of me. Me. No one else. Not the police, not my mom, not my PO, me. I did it. They said those were the rules, and I broke them. But see, when everyone likes are, I'm not gonna give that up. But, no, it would be my fault. Well, forget it. You did it. You do the time. People always complain about getting locked. Shhh, you did the crime. But we didn't even follow. But it's coo', part of life.

-Me

From The Beat: It's hard to read your writing, Anonymous. Are you saying, "Grow up. You did bla bla bla and got busted for it, so take the consequences? Quit crying?" Good advice.

Life Is Golden

Never giving up, that's not what we do
Keep on movin', being a survivor through you
Society has failed me so many times
Poundin' and whining, but givin' up never on my mind
Life is too precious to lose
Society can never fail me again,
'cause I'm not giving up Boo
You already woke me up, but I'm living my dream...
Livin' life like it's golden...

-C-Littles

From The Beat: How do you live your life "like it's golden?" How has society failed you? What could society have done for you to keep you from the path you followed? What can society do for you as you move forward through life to make real success more possible?

Don't Wake Me Up 'Cause I'm Dreaming

Q vole? Well, once again dis homegirl is writing to say w'at's up, and that I am surviving dis crazy world. The topic I am gonna write on is my best dream. I remember this dream like if it was yesterday.

My dream was that I finally got to see my sexy man after four months! We were holding each other and I just felt a lot better 'cause I haven't felt his touch for a while. It felt so dang real.

He said to me, "Baby, I'll never let you go again." But when he said that, he started drifting away and I heard my roommate yelling in my ear saying, "Time for breakfast." I wished that I could have went on dreaming. I tried going back to my dream but it didn't work.

No, I haven't had this dream more than once, I hella wish I did. Well, I love my baby. I want him to know I love him. Well this homegirl is out. Alrato.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Isn't it frustrating to wake up from a dream that you want to return to, but never can? Of course, you will get out of here and be back in your man's arms. The question we have is what do you plan to do so that you're not snatched from him once again?

When I Was Little!

I was hurt,
In pain,
Very sad.
Had one parent
Who was an
Alcoholic
I wasn't cared for
Or loved
Never hugged, kissed,
Tucked in at night.
I was beat, slapped,
Kicked and cussed out
When I was little I was all alone.

-Lacey

From The Beat: This is a very sad poem, Lacey, and we're sorry you had to grow up this way. No child should have to experience what you experienced, but far too many children do. Now that you are no longer little, you are no longer alone. Now you can make your own life and your own family. Now you can begin to show the love that still lives within you.

Hating The System

I feel like every time I go to get a job "The Man" always tryna hate on me and my people. And every damn time I go to court they be saying hella bullshhh, like I'm a "menace to society."

Man, stomp they couch! Real talk! I hate the system and everybody they work for. They wacko like tobacco, real talk, and I'm out yadada-smell good.

-Young P

From The Beat: When you write, "Stomp they couch," you give the judge ammunition to label you a menace to society. Can you find a way to live in society without giving power to a system you hate to control you? What kind of jobs have you tried to get? What kind of job would you like to do? How can you achieve that goal?

Growing Up

Growing up I was all alone. All alone on the streets of Richmond, scared, cold, and confused. All I had was drugs and myself. Growing up on the streets was hard. I had to get to know people, had to do things just to fit in, and I had to fight people to get my next bag.

Growing up was hard, but I made it through. And I'm livin' life.

-Lacey

From The Beat: Were the drugs you got into a substitute for the love you didn't get from your family? Have you seen now that "medicating" your pain with drugs only leads to more pain? We hope so because you have a lifetime ahead of you to live, and living it to the fullest means keeping your head clear and alert.

Who I Am Today

Man this shhh is wack
Therapist and POs is on my back
Trying to make me cut them some slack
Trying to keep me locked up in this messed up place
While these hatas smile in my face
And I'm ready to square up with these hatas any day
My theme is to get this money every day
I try and I pray to let this bullshhh float away
I live my life day to day
Selling that coke, not knowing it wasn't the best way
But who I know will protect me in the best way?
The fam 'cause they supported me in the best way
And that's why I'm who I am today

-Nukie Baby

From The Beat: What new ways are you learning while you're here? What are you learning about yourself that will help you stay free and healthy

Society has failed me so many times
Poundin' 'n' whining, but givin' up
never on my mind
Life is too precious to lose
Society can never fail me again,
'cause I'm not giving up Boo

Open Wounds

The world made me give up. I've had so much stuff that has been going through.

Pain from within
Pain from without
Guns coming at me
The love is gone
The hate is coming
My freedom ended
My heart was alive
Now it's dead
My arms are bleeding
As the skin opens up
And now it's time because
I'm giving it all up!

-B-eyes

From The Beat: No, B-eyes, your heart is not dead. Far from it! We feel the passion in everything you write, and passion comes from the heart! When you write that you're "giving it all up," what are you thinking about? Whatever you're giving up (drugs? drama? the streets?), we hope you fill the space with something positive and good for your future, whether it's a hobby, school, a job or anything else that will move your life forward.

Where Is It?

Hey, Beat Within I have wrote lots of Beats and have not seen them in the Beats, where is it? Huh

-Not Signed

From The Beat: Since you didn't put your name down, we don't even know who we are addressing, so we don't know where your pieces are. Can you identify yourself — and write something meaningful.



From The Beat: A few weeks ago we announced that we stopped accepting submissions for the 15th Editorial Note Writing Contest: *Turning Back The Hands Of Time*. And since then we've published close to fifteen contest pieces within the last three issues. The four following pieces are our latest submissions. We'll continue to keep publishing them until it's time for our staff to vote on the winners. Remember the first-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each.

And if you forgot the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story — share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like the weather, the competition is heating up as we have two submissions from workshop participants in San Mateo Juvenile Hall (Hillcrest), one from our beloved Michael Cabral, and another from OG Beat writer Eugene Weems. Who knew a mere couple of questions would ignite such incredible writing? We guess that just reiterates how intelligent the minds we work with are. If only the rest of the world would realize this, then maybe they'd give us room to be productive instead of pushing us down every time we try to overcome and rise up. All we can do is continue the struggle as you keep creating these amazing works of art. Thanks to all...

MICHAEL CABRAL

Pelican Bay State Prison
Crescent City, CA

Admit That I'm Loved

I spend a lot of time trying to convince myself that I wouldn't change anything about my past. That although I'm hurting inside right now because of everything I have been and am going through, I'd do everything I've ever done all over again. But do you wanna hear a secret? If turning back the hands of time were as easy as it is imagined, I would relive, from the very beginning of it, my seventeenth year on earth.

Looking back now, it's easy to see where I made, maybe, one or two... or three billion mistakes! But, at the same time, I can also look back and realize that for my entire life I have been a loved (a very loved) person. When I was seventeen, however, a grown man if you'd asked me, I wouldn't admit that — not to myself nor any other being. Which in my opinion is, in spite of the three billion or so mistakes I have made, the only thing I didn't do right. And that's what I'd go back and change.

Almost everyday I find myself wondering about all of the "if only's," "I should have's," and "why didn't's" of my life. If only he would have left with everybody else... I should have been watching TV with my mom... why didn't I just leave... And a whole bunch more. For each and every one of them, though, I can always find, in some sense, a logical explanation. Well, except for this one: why didn't I acknowledge and embrace the fact that people love me?

What comes to my mind every time I ask myself that question is my crime. Two ignorant months after my seventeenth birthday, I committed second-degree murder. I took one man's life away, and gave away my own! Why? It doesn't matter. Not right now.

This much I will say: I did what I did because of and for the people I love, my family. That makes things "okay." Right? If I did it out of my love for my family, where then is the relevance of feeling, and admitting that I am loved in return? Let me tell you.

Had I taken just two breaths to tell myself, "Michael, your momma loves the hell out of you! Your brothers, sister, father, and even a couple of your homeboys do too!" I honestly believe that I wouldn't be here. Because I would have realized that all I was doing was bringing more hurt into the world and saying good-bye, maybe even forever, to the people and person who have always and will always matter the most — my family and myself. Yeah, myself.

Nobody comes into the world of prison and remains forever the person they once were. In my case, the smart, funny, good-looking kid everybody loves. So why didn't I just... If only I would have... Actually, that's over now. But I'll never make that same mistake ever again!

"Turning Back

The Hands Of Time"

NADIA

San Mateo County Juvenile Hall
(Hillcrest)

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Even if I could turn back time, I wouldn't. I think that everything that happens in a person's life is for something. It just doesn't happen because it wants to. I think that everything in my life has happened for a purpose to teach me something. I've grown up with people telling me that everything that I do in my life is because I made the decision, whether right or wrong.

I shouldn't regret anything. I don't regret anything that has happened to me. I've learned from my mistakes whether people believe it or not. Because only the person knows within if they're sorry or not, or they have repented or not. In my opinion, whatever I have done, good or bad, I've always held my head up high and I'm not ashamed of what I have done. Thank God that I haven't done anything too serious that cannot be forgiven.

In my opinion, whatever I have
done, good or bad, I've always
held my head up high and I'm not
ashamed of what I have done.

HECTOR

San Mateo County Juvenile Hall
(Hillcrest)

Turn Back Time

Everything would be different if I never got on probation. I lost everything — friends, family, loved ones. But most of all I lost my freedom. Getting on probation messed up my life. I'm at a phase in my life without any purpose. There's no hope and no dreams — nothing. Everyday I wake up not knowing what I'm going to do with my life. I'm constantly afraid of having fun. If I have too much fun, I might get locked up.

My life is hanging by a thin rope about to rip. Every time I get close to getting off probation, something happens and it starts all over. The trust in my family is gone. There's no trust for a thief. I lost my family and everything in my life that meant something to me. If I can turn back time, everything would be different.

EUGENE WEEMS

West Valley Detention Center
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

If I Could Turn The Hands Of Time Back

I had a friend who would always tell me he was not afraid of anyone or anything. He would stand up and challenge the toughest kids in the neighborhood and even gang members who claim to own the respect of the hood, but after accomplishing beating them he still wasn't satisfied with his achievement. It just didn't fulfill that void within him. He wanted to be feared and looked upon and known around the neighborhood as fearless, unafraid of anything and anyone, the heart of a lion. He just wasn't getting that vibe from those around him. He guess it might had something to do with his cheerful and humorous attitude, always cracking jokes and advertising his pearly whites. He couldn't help that, that was just who he was. So he figured that could be the reason why he felt people weren't fearing him and respecting that he wasn't fearless.

So to show his courage, he waited on a Friday when he knew that the kids and gangsters would be hanging out in the hood. He strolled down the street where everyone was hanging out. His presence on the scene didn't demand anyone's attention, but soon as he pulled out the 357 long nose revolver, eyes widened, heads ducked, smiles disappeared, faces clouded up, and the attention he wanted was what he got. He drew a calming breath staring at the gun in his hand. He thumbed the cylinder latch open with his right, pointed the gun up to the sky and used his left hand to slap the extractor rod hard enough to release the six bullets. They fell to the ground. And he addresses the crowd for the first time. "I'll show you that I'm not afraid of shhh."

Everyone was now anticipating what he was going to do. They watched as he bent down and picked up one of

the bullets and placed it in the chamber and slapped the cylinder back in place, and gave it a good spin. "Now who has the heart to do this?" he shouted, bringing the barrel to the side of his head. He pulled the trigger. It clicked. Voices quavered from the crowd pleading his discontinuation of the act. Their pleas only added wood to the fire that was already flamed within him. So he pulled the trigger again once more and it clicked. "Even the gun is afraid of me and respects my mind!" he yelled before squeezing the trigger for the third time. The roar ranged in my ears. He was no longer standing; brain matters went flying out the other side of his head. My fearless friend's body thumped to the sidewalk. He was dead.

A crack head stepped up behind me to get a closer look at my friend's life less body and said, "Man, Joe was the most fearless and bravest dude he ever known, but he was also the craziest and dumbest." I felt the heat quickly rise within me. I was ready to turn and stomp the crack head down for the disrespect, but the crack head was right. My friend Joe was dumb because he had his concepts of having no fear mixed up. Respectful fear and courage are normal emotions that we all experience in life. Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage without fear. This is not a cowardly fear, but a driving fear to encourage you to fight even harder to achieve a goal, or protect yourself or someone else from harm. Without fear a person would walk in front of a speeding car, believing that it would bounce off of them. They would walk into a burning house thinking that the fire wouldn't burn them. They would walk in the middle of a shoot out feeling that bullets would only miss. But the truth is my friend Joe was a real dumb fool if I must say so because fear warns us of danger, but a damn fool has no fear.

So if I could turn back the hands of time, I would turn the clocks back the first day I noticed my friend Joe trying to prove himself that he feared nothing and I would do my best to get him to understand that only a damn fool has no fear.



So if I could turn back the hands of time, I would turn the clocks back the first day I noticed my friend Joe trying to prove himself that he feared nothing and I would do my best to get him to understand that only a damn fool has no fear.

MONROE COUNTY JAIL WRITINGS

Remarkable contributions come from young people in the Monroe County Jail (they have all been tried as adults) in upstate New York. Like all the best writing from Beat writers, these young people describe lives of desperation: the pain of jail — isolation and loneliness, the pain of hurting their families, the pain of absent or abusive fathers and mothers unable to provide, the pain of loss and the pain of feeling lost. We are honored to publish some very fine poetry from New York State young people trying to understand their lives and circumstances, while trying to make us understand as well. They sent us about seven thousand stellar words of writing, but because that would take almost half of the BWO section, we decided to break their writing into three parts. This is only the first installment, so if you enjoy it, be on the lookout for them over the next couple of weeks. And don't be afraid to give us feedback so we can then pass it on to them. We think they're outstanding. The following paragraph describes the program: The following pieces are from the Monroe County Jail in Rochester, New York. They are submitted by Dale Davis, Executive Director, The New York State Literary Center. The writing resulted from an Empire State Partnership, made possible by The New York State Council on The Arts, between The New York State Literary Center and the Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs. The partnership is grateful to Dr. Manuel Rivera, Superintendent of Rochester City School District, for his commitment to diversity; C. Michael Robinson, Chief of Operations, Rochester City School District, for his pioneering foresight in education; Margaret Porter, Program Administrator, Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs; Patrick M. O'Flynn, Monroe County Sheriff.

Rochester, New York As the following description makes clear, these

Why, why are ninety percent of the crimes in New York Black on Black?

Jail Bird Song

You see me, a young man who has been through the
struggle,
who has been corrupted by crime
and drugs,
and who was always in trouble,
who was always getting put down,
who did not know which way was up.
When I went to sleep, all I wanted was to be hugged.
My family was all out of shape,
misplaced and misguided.
I walked around with a lot of hurt,
tried to hide it,
denied it.
The fact was I was by myself,
had no food,
no love,
no wealth.
I dreamed of no more drama, but it never came true.
I had bad karma,
the life I lived was not always right.
I was denied the simple pleasure of a family.
My mom did what she knew,
got on her grind,
slipped up,
and got caught.
She did her time.

I never thought my life would end up like this.
I moved from family to family
just to get one gift, love.
I always walked around like I didn't exist,
like I didn't care if I died
because I wouldn't be missed.
Frankly, it has been this way for years.
I'm eighteen and not a baby,
but I am still shedding tears.
My world is cold.
I should know that holding beef is a reality.
Make it through today
despite the heat
and know that tomorrow is never taken for granted.
Waking up alive,
taking life for granted,
living wrong,
now I wonder why I'm singing a jail song.

-Sam

Making Sense Of It

I'm living my life in poverty, drugs, and
all the rest of the struggles in the "ghetto."
To tell the truth I lived my life without hope of seeing a
new day.
My life was 9 to 5 without a job
because I was the first one on the block and last
one to leave,
or so I thought.

My home is the block I hustled on,
my home, my territory, where I eat.
Don't you eat at home?
Don't you guard your home with your life?
This is how it is for people who struggle guarding the
block.

I cannot make sense of my life.
I'm lost.
I can't justify why I land in certain situations.
All I know is it's a cycle, and it must be broken.
There are millions of people just like me
with life cycles that need to be broken.

-Jasper

Life Goes On

Life goes on,
what can you do to this kid?
I didn't think I had a choice
but to take what life gives.
I was a soldier, look into my eyes.

Day by day,
I did what I thought I had to do to survive,
so if you ask me what life is about,
man you can't do anything
once the lights are out.

Life's about you being good to your family.

Every day
I ask myself why am I here.
Why am I on this earth?
Why, why
do I cry these tears?

Why, why
do our youth act the way they do?
Why, why
are ninety percent of the crimes in New York Black on
Black?

-Justin

MONROE COUNTY JAIL WRITINGS (CONT.)

I Am Thinking

Pedro, P-Boy, my only friend.
 I remember all of the good stuff we did.
 I miss the days we chilled.
 I now see my family in pain for some things
 That could have been prevented.
 I miss you my brother.
 How you loved to race.
 Why did you have to die this way?

Day by day, night-by-night I count my days as they go by.
 I cry with no tears coming down.
 There is so much madness I have found.
 The pain I bring to the ones that I love,
 I hope they forgive me for the problems I have brought.
 I sit in my cell thinking of what I have done,
 not once or twice but a million times.

In and out, I live with trust.
 Mother, mother will you hear these words I have to say.
 Mother, mother will you please forgive me
 for the promises I broke on Mother's Day.
 I thank you for being there on a jail day.
 I am ashamed.

I pray every night to the mighty God to give me one more
 chance.
 It was a one-time mistake.
 Mother, mother
 I am sorry for not being there on Mother's Day.

I miss my mom.
 I miss my sisters.
 Don't cry, don't cry, that will break my heart.
 My spirit is here to comfort you all while I am gone.
 Don't cry, don't cry,
 the Lord is watching over you.
 I pray every night and ask the Lord to bless you all.

My life is like a book,
 a never-ending story with different characters.
 I have been good and bad.
 I have passed.
 Now I am in an orange suit
 wondering when they will let me out.
 I am starving myself until they let me out.
 I am looking at pictures and reading mail over and over
 again.
 I know it is time to change or this will be where I will stay

I cry, I cry all day long.
 I cry, I cry until I get lost.

I cry, I cry until new tears come.
 I cry, I cry until I fall.
 I cry, I cry for something I have lost.

When I was twelve was the first time I smoked a blunt.
 When I was thirteen,
 it was the first time I left my house.
 When I was fourteen,
 I was on the streets all day long getting money.
 When I was fifteen,
 I was in rehab but not for too long.
 Now I am sixteen and in jail for the first time.
 I know I have to change my ways
 or I won't live for too long.

I had the privilege of freedom,
 until one day I lost it all.
 I had the privilege to be with my family,
 until the law took everything I loved.

I know now that life is something you have to value,
 but protecting my family was all I was trying to do,
 that's all this ghetto child was trying to do,
 trying to protect his family.
 Judge,
 please don't look at me as a criminal.
 I have a good heart.
 I am human.

Telephone, telephone
 please don't let me cry today.
 Phone, phone,
 please don't have a collect call blocked today.
 Phone, phone,
 please let me speak to my family this day.
 Phone, phone,
 this is all I ask you this very day.

Mother, mother why did you lie to me?
 Mother, mother I thought you were going to put money in
 my commissary.
 Mother, mother I know I have to be independent.
 I love you my mother,
 but it is time for me to be a man.

I dream
 that one day I will come down the stage
 with a high school diploma.
 I want my mom to be happy.
 I dream of going to college,
 and of having my love be my wife some day.

-Angel

See What I See

I see kids grow up in a facility like this.
 I see grown men get pulled down.
 I see fear grow to an extent that horrifies my mind.
 I see Black kids become animals of jail.
 I see great minds become useless in months.
 I see depression take over young men's lives.
 I see stress turn men into beasts.
 I see beasts turn into the devil himself.
 I see many young men become another young man's slave.
 I see a mother's worry turn into an illness.
 I see kids deprived of their pride and souls.
 I see all of this.
 This is just jail, and that's it.

-Sam

I see Black kids become
 animals of jail.

I see great minds become
 useless in months.

MONROE COUNTY JAIL WRITINGS (CONT.)

I think about my moms and ask myself when we will meet.

I ask myself every day why I lived my life in the streets.

Where Is Home

I lived my life too fast and too crazy.
Every day I walked the streets of the Roc
and I saw things I never expected to see
and I did things I never expected to do.

I am seventeen years old
spending months in jail with people I barely know,
eating food I don't eat,
and sharing thoughts with strange people.

My home was on my block

I barely went home,
stayed on the block until I felt like I wanted to leave,
stayed chilling,
drinking,
and wasting my life.

I see myself
either trying to get larger
or trying to get myself prepared for the worst that can
happen to me.

Do I really have to worry about anything?
I have my mom, Brenda, on my right hand,
and my grandma, Pecola, on my left hand.
They will never leave my side.

When I was thirteen years old
my mother left me.
She had walking pneumonia and AIDS.
My grandmother passed away in 2005.
She was very ill, and she tried to stay strong.
My mother and my grandmother will always be by my
side.

I never knew God would let me live to see another day.
I never knew
I could feel so lonely inside.
I never knew my mans was going to leave me
when it was time to ride.
I never knew my mom and grandma
were going to stick with me, be by my side.
I never knew I was going to live my life in the streets.
I never knew I was going to play the block with the heat.
I never knew
I was going to be in jail from living my life in the streets.
I never knew
I was wasting my life day by day in the streets.

I have a confession to make.
I will not eat.
I will not sleep.
I think about my moms and ask myself when we will
meet.
I ask myself every day why I lived my life in the streets.

Why can't a young Black kid like me go to school
Instead I stayed in the streets and played with my handy,
dandy toys.

It was a rule I lived by, a code I went by.
I ask myself why do I go through all that stress.
People test me from the heart, and God bless me from
the heart.

Me, my grandma, and my mom will meet again
and no one will ever tear us apart.

-Casey

Daddy

I hate my dad.
I hate my dad
because he liked crack and drinking more than his
family.
I hate my dad
because he was never there to help me.
He wasn't there to teach me to play ball
or cast a fishing pole.
He came in and out of my life.
He was never there to help me when I fell.
He promised to pick me up at school
on my birthday,
but never showed.
I hate my dad
because every year or so
he would call or send me a card
talking about how he wants to see me and be a part of my
life.
He made a bunch of empty promises
that I knew he would never keep.
I hate my dad
because he beat my mom.
I hate my dad for not ever being there.
I have never really sat down and thought about it before,
but now that I have I hate him so much more.
Now I realize it's good he wasn't there
because if he was I wouldn't have a chance to make it
anywhere.
My whole life he made empty promises
just to bring me down.
Now that he's gone I will not frown.

-Drew

I hate my dad for not ever being there.
I have never really sat down and
thought about it before,
but now that I have I hate him so
much more.

Dreams

Mi sueño son salir de este lugar
volver can mi familia terminar la escuela
Trabajar abris mi propia barberia y ayudar
a mis amigos para sacarlos de las calles
estos son mis sueños y quiero hacerlos que
se cumplan en realidad.

My dream is to get out of this place
and go back with my family.
I want to finish school, get a job, and open my own
barbershop.

I want to help my friends, too.
I want to get them out of the streets.
These are the dreams I want to come true.

-Melvin

Chapter 2 'Teenage Defiance'

Well, it was done. That very night when my dad came home because of a stressful call from his girlfriend I let the bitterness flow in a nonceasing jumble of tears and tales. I told everything that happened and gave up the knife. It was over, for now.

A couple of weeks later my father, now separated from our tormenter, let me in on quite an unsuspecting surprise. Our real mother was coming to see us. I never even knew I had one, but I was immediately excited to meet her. I was so happy that I would constantly ask questions about her.

But nothing was ever revealed from my amateur inquiry. Only mystery. Only mystery to dream.

So then comes the day that my father leaves to pick up my mother and it was just me and my sister. We sat on the couch in the living room talking for at least an hour. I kept thinking on how I would say hello to her. A woman, who is my real mother, who I've never seen before. How was I supposed to say hello? Or act and talk to her?

It started to get dark outside and as the minutes went by ever slower my heart beat slowly faster.

And then our father's car pulls up and I froze. I couldn't move, or think, or say anything. It's as if I was paralyzed by surprise and anticipation.

Then our father walked in with my mother, with her fire red hair and big smile. I think she was just as nervous as I was. After all those years not knowing what your son and daughter will look, or act, like. But she was here.

So I ran to her crying and hugged her for, at the least, ten minutes. I don't know why but I was relieved and cautious at the same time. Perhaps it was because of the early betrayal of my other "so-called" mother.

But I didn't have a choice really. So I was confronted with going through it again. Confront it I would do.

After a few days I became accustomed to my new mother and her ways. She was a fun person to be around and wasn't at all that strict.

So I tested the boundaries a lot and was thrilled at the fact that I could probably do anything without consequences. I was soon proven wrong in that philosophy.

My first crime was committed when I was in the fourth grade. I was very late for school and I was in a panic so I stole what looked like a respectable bike to ride. I made it just in time for school and thought nothing of what I had done.

After the schools last bell rung for the end of our day I came back to my remembrance of the bike I had taken. I couldn't just leave it there at the school so I rode it home. About halfway home I was spotted by the M.P.'s of the base and was taken on the spot.

I don't remember much except the cops threatening me with doing time in a smelly drunk tank, which terrified me, and apologizing for stealing the bike. This is around the time that I decided to experiment in lying for my first serious problem I committed.

Standing in front of two adults trying to apologize didn't help me one bit.

So I told them their son let me borrow the bike so I could get to school.

To my utmost surprise, they countered my story by bringing their daughter out who actually owned the bike and proving that no son existed.

I definitely didn't see that coming at all. My shame and embarrassment multiplied greatly so that I couldn't say anything else. I apologized eventually and that was that.

So my first crime was of my own making. There wasn't so much as fear of doing it but fear of being caught. To do a crime at the spur of the moment is usually how crime begins. The overwhelming urge becomes a second voice or a personality and it's hard to come to your original self as you portrayed yourself to be until that

JEREMY TOWNER Lately, we've been receiving more writing from this next novelist than any other Beat writer. In fact, he's even sending us pages of his autobiography chapters at a time. Last week we published the first chapter and was blown away by the way his stepmother treated him. Sure we hear horrific tales all the time, but when you add that kind of story with the writing skills of Jeremy, the world better look out because we may have the next Sidney Shelton on our hands. This chapter, titled 'Teenage Defiance' is less disturbing in that he finally gets a stroke of luck when some members of his family are rearranged to best fit him, or so we think? You can never tell with such a creative writer like Jeremy. One minute you think you know what's going to happen, then you read through and realize you really didn't have a clue at all. And they say the mark of a good storyteller is that they keep you wanting more. Well, writing from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA, is unfortunate for such a beautiful mind like his, but hey at least he still gets to write. And for that we're grateful because every time we read, we want more. Take a look for yourself and you'll see what we're ranting and raving about.

moment.

It's as if there was a fire. The immediate reaction is to put water on it before it becomes an element of destruction. But what if you had no water and this was the first time you have ever seen a wild blaze that's out of place in the norm of things. How could you begin to understand or know how to alleviate this flame? Sometimes that's how criminals feel. It's always after the fact that they are terribly sorry only because they could now see that the crime they committed could have been done another way. They don't think of not committing the crime itself but how to alleviate the obstacles in order to achieve that goal for whatever insane selfish reason. And so the repeat offenders continue to relive the crime time after time until they figure it out that for every crime comes a different puzzle of succeeding even though it's the same kind of robbery or violence etc... etc.

It took me a while to figure out my own criminal anticipation but it is always too late when we begin to see what we've done. After we lose everything forever is when we begin to realize how, why, and what could have been done, to keep everything we ever needed.

With great issues beginning to overcome my understanding and reason my years to come would prove to me that there was always something to guide my decision. But as it was there, so close to me, its voice was far away.

We moved once again after four years of service, my father broke his leg snowboarding and could no longer perform for our country. We moved back to Santa Rosa in California, to live with my grandmother and my grandfather. My grades in school were failing and I had no direction. As the ways of life would have it my rebellion turned on full force.

I was introduced to pot by my sister's friends. I started to smoke, skip school, steal from my family and local stores. I don't know why I did it. All I could think of was the thrill and challenge of trying to get away with it.

My ego would be my downfall many times. One night I excused myself to bed at 8:30 in the evening and I jumped out my bedroom window and didn't come back until 2:30 in the morning. To my surprise I could not get back in because everything was locked up. I knew my father had caught me this time. So without any regard to what might happen, I broke my window and climbed in only to get punched in my face by my father and then dragged into the living room. He took everything out of my pockets and kicked me out the door.

I had just turned 13 years old and was now faced with my dilemma of how to survive. I couldn't ask for my mom's help because she was kicked out of the house never to be seen. My sister was given a quarter and was told to live somewhere else.

My life was separating too fast to comprehend. A bird kicked out of the nest to fly on my own. And so my journey begins. (To be continued next week)

Swimming In Sin

Sifting through my darkness
Like swimming at the bottom of the sea
Looking for a guiding source
To shed light on my iniquity
My breath is my patience
And it runs out with times old age
Setting my spirit restless
With a breath of desperate rage
And now I see death
As my only choice to live
For I cannot find my guiding source
To my spirit I should give
And lo behold hope is seen

A shimmer of imagination and hope
A pillar of light that's in my sight
And my spirit begins to float
Out of the depths of death
I swim higher towards the light
Seeing a whole new life that was always there.
Plaques my mind with fright
But the water is warm
And feels like life
The radiance of the source
Dispels my struggle and strife
Frees me from a pit
Of ego, pride, and sin
Into a new life of wonder
My spirit begins to live.

MONSTA-ED

When The Beat gets rolling like it's supposed to, the possibilities are limitless. When all cylinders are going, we usually start expanding to new places through new writers. This week we have a new writer who's writing from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And if the rest of his poems are even remotely as good as this next one, then we're in store for yet another superstar. He describes how he came up with the idea for his poem in his letter, which we're also publishing. "They Should've Let Me Chill" is a saying we're sure most of us could relate to. Sometimes people in a position of power abuse it like they'll have control of us forever. But what real rehabilitation does is teach us how to control ourselves, so is the system really rehabilitating the people they've grown so scared of. Hey, just brush our problems under a rug called State Prison and hopefully they'll go away the next time we look under there. Well, The Beat doesn't believe in that so with that said, please take heed to the words of this new knockout writer.

They Should've Let Me Chill

They should've let me chill;
Now they want to analyze how I feel,
and why I get the urge to ...

It's not that I'm confused,
Authority has been misused,
I've been falsely accused.

As for the ones who done me wrong,
Lay them on they back and play that song,
Precious Lord take me home.

So when they family look to the sky,
As if to ask the Lord why,
It's because they didn't let this sleeping dog lie.

You can bet this,
Many of my mites will be restless,
Until I get justice.

When they realize,
They've been caught by surprise,
No need to apologize,
Just look into these eyes,
Because no longer will my life be compromised.

DEREK MIZE

Have you ever witnessed someone so good with words that it's hard to understand what they're saying sometimes? Well, maybe it's just this editor's lack of sleep or something but you guys tell us if you can make this out. It sounds like he was playing with words incredibly and we got several visuals, but when it came to the end, we found ourselves wondering what exactly was he talking about. Maybe he's too smart for us, but we're going to publish it nonetheless. He's writing from California State Prison Solano in Vacaville, CA. Maybe he can write us back and explain it to us a little more.

Ninety-One Reasons To Eternity

The chord of envy her web befriend me
War sword on empty forward my intent be
Abolish the broken words that can soak sin
Don't provoke then magic woke in cloaks hoax friend
What is an answer with no question
A cut to a suggestion stance of pure lesson
Guess stamp plan the next thought
Amp at rest clan checks the best plot
No clot twin breaths expand over basic
Stop ask for air gasp death's glare sober stay sick

Reason choose reason win
Sun, the breeze the views a season then
Eclipse might blind you askew of my mind brew
A lesson defined to stop stressin' the kind of few
Repeat 2x

First no treason catch a hearse breathing
Is it when a casket opens

It's good to see a publication where people
can express themselves young and old
alike. And can take from it what they will.

Greetings

My name is Eddie Marshall and I'm coming at you from Corcoran hole. I was kicking back eating a stale bread sandwich when Guadafl, the five percenter, slid me The Beat Within. So I started glancing through it and the 'upside down mug shot' by James Crawford caught my eye and so did a few others.

It's good to see a publication where people can express themselves young and old alike. And can take from it what they will. I would like to receive The Beat Within weekly. I would also like to have a few of my poems and writing published in The Beat.

As far as my poems go, they are kind of deep so if you guys at The Beat can't swim, let me know and I'll have somebody send you all some life vests, (ha, ha).

Mad props to Sandy and David, the co-founders of The Beat, and to all the staff. Before I go I would like to leave you with a poem that I wrote when I first came to the hole. What inspired this poem is I was set up by the police at Salinas Valley State Prison where the 'Green Wall' (police gang) set me up and lied on me and put me in the hole for a Battery on a Peace Officer. It's called 'They Should've Let Me Chill.' If you print it, will you at least send me the Beat it's in, and if not, will you let me know why?

Until I write again, y'all be cool and I'll hit you with something else later. To all on your staff and on the streets, y'all need to stay down with a brotha fo' real. If you have any feedback, I would love to hear it. Much love to y'all...

Search for the curse you'll catch if soaken
Beneath reach hand grasp for air
Choke on your own vomit sands that mask rare
What a cover up nitro pump start your heart spare
Focus to see rubber cut and free
Her club prefer key get a rising out of me
Despite nightly occasions strike like abrasions
Cut deeper the reaper what might take evasions

Reason choose reason win
Sun, the breeze the views a season then
Eclipse might blind you askew of my mind brew
A lesson defined to stop stressin' the kind of few
Repeat 2x

Now or never how you're clever
Offense settle sure endow the metal pure
Reign swore majesty in pain the care baddest be
Top it off tropical cough
Every minute in an hour drop the sick ill broth
Niche send the goth aloft topic will you
Other than that suckas I kill you
X-ray woman sex play bomb lemon
I devour them sour notches
Very in her power twin tower pen blotches

One reason choose fourth reason win
Sun, the breeze the views a season then
Eclipse might blind you askew of my mind brew
A lesson defined to stop stressin' the kind of few
Repeat 2x

Satan's At Work

Salam Alekum: In the Holy Quran Sura 5:91 it says:

"Satan's plan is but to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer: will you not then abstain?"

Satan's goal has always been to lead us away from God. He is God's enemy. And he has so much hatred for God and humanity he spends every second of every day trying to corrupt us. Look what it says in the Holy Quran:

"Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires; but Satan's promises are nothing but deception (4:120)"

"O Men! Certainly the promise of Allah is true. Let not this present life deceive you, nor let this chief deceiver deceive you about Allah. Satan is an enmity to you: so treat him as an enemy. He only invites his followers that they may become companions of the blazing fire. (35:5-6)"

Let us understand the true source of our pain. Satan's the reason your parents were addicted to drugs; he's the reason we prostitute our bodies and kill each other. Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren aren't the brainiacs of fashion — Satan is. The more interest we invest in fashions, foods, thuggery, and other evilness, the more we're going against God. This is Satan's plan.

In the holy Quran it says: "The evil one threatens you with poverty..." (2:268)

If we truly surrender ourselves to the authority of Allah we will not go hungry or poor. But most of us don't know this because most of us haven't submitted ourselves to God. Satan puts into our minds that we better go out and rob someone or sell someone some drugs if we going to survive. And this simply isn't true, and by threatening us with poverty, he gets us to act sinfully against God. And our sins lead us to hell right where Satan is trying to get us. There are a lot of people who have lived falsely and continue to live falsely. Why? Because they're learning their truth from Satan — the chief deceiver.

In the Qur'an Sura 3:60 it says: "The truth comes from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt."

You'll never know the truth until you turn to the word of God. After all, he did create the universe and every thing in it. Doesn't it make sense to go to him for guidance?

UHURU

It's about time... we were waiting for our spiritual dosage. It's much needed in these parts infested with materialism, capitalism, consumerism, and any other ism that has us chasing things that are temporary — things that are miniscule compared to what this next writer speaks of. In a place where evil is apparent everywhere you look, Uhuru finds himself through Allah. And in doing so is spreading the word to the rest of us about what's really going on. He quotes the Qur'an, but doesn't stop there. He then gives his own interpretation of what's been quoted, so we can better understand. And from looking at how he pieces these quotes together, we can tell that he's serious about his spiritual journey. He writes from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA. We can't wait to see this return address again.

Self-Glory And Separatism

Salem Alekum: The Holy Qur'an says in Sura 38:Z: "But the unbelievers are steeped in self-glory and separatism."

Satan's number one tool for creating hatred and envy among men is competition. He used competition to make us tribal. He uses it to make us kill, steal and commit many sins. And why do we compete? For self-glory. We want all the praise and honors of "winning". I think we need to redefine our definition of winning. We need to dissolve the competitive mentality in order to dissolve the separatism in our communities.

Winning does not mean beating someone else; it does not mean deceasing someone else so you can increase yourself — to win means to fight the devil in your own soul and not to allow him to make you sin. Winning means compassion, kindness, piety, generosity, charity, prayer, honesty, and respect for others. Winning means going to heaven when you die. The only way we can get to heaven is by avoiding sin. How do we sin? The Holy Qur'an says: "Do not put yourselves forward before Allah..." (49:1)

You win by putting God first. If you put yourself first, that is self-glory, which is separatism, and now you're a part of the problem.

The Holy Qur'an says: "The mutual rivalry for piling up the good things of this world diverts you from the more serious things (102:1)."

Money, cars, jewelry, fashion, playerism and thuggery are tools Satan uses to make you kill people; these are the things he uses to make you sell drugs to people; these are things he uses to make you steal from people; these are things that make you envious and competitive; these things create separatism.

We must put God first people. If we ever hope to see peace and prosperity, freedom and unity we must put God first.

I sincerely love all my brothers and sisters. Stay strong and do right.

JOSEPH PULLIAM

This is what The Beat is all about: taking ideas that haven't been challenged and challenging them in a way that makes sense. We might as well since we have nothing but time. Well, that's what are dear friend Joseph does for us this week. He takes an attitude 'Rude?' and flips it on those who probably call others rude the most. There are many different forms of being rude as there are many different ways to spell it as his last line describes. But what we also may fail to realize is that some things are deemed rude in certain cultures that aren't deemed rude in other cultures. For instance, in some cultures they burp after a meal to show their appreciation. But in America, that's considered rude. So this word is culturally diverse — keep that in mind while reading this piece. Joseph writes from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Rude?

Hardly. Like I explained the other day there exists myriads of distresses and pressure, which descend upon from every direction and impose themselves, or are "assessed" by powers that vie. These be-felled and unforeseen circumstances exert an onerous weight upon the shoulders of our spirit, and too often topple the cradle of our well-being. Further, since none of us are perfect, innate character sensibilities must be factored. Consequently personalities, as from time to time they are apt to do, will clash.

It's been said that any attention, even negative, is better than none at all. I however do not subscribe to this school of thought and believe rather than risk saying the wrong thing (especially when in an emotionally malaise state), one would be wise to say no — thing.

Generally speaking, silence should not be regarded as a

personal affront. It's sound should be warmly embraced and treasured as a precious gem. (Besides, haven't you been in situations before where you've wished that someone would just shut their f/n mouth?!)

More often than not, people of reasonable intelligence and civility will act in a certain unconventional way not because they are intending to be ruled, rued, rood or even rude! But because they are merely responding to some internal reaction brought about by some external dis-ease.

What's the issue(s)? Well, it/they began in the Garden. Then were disseminated (as opposed to dissipated) throughout Earth. And clung to life like the field stench that must have been-waay bac' w'en, as wee wuz bein' shipp'd from dee Motha Lan.' Peculiarities, particular to the African American Man/Women dynamic — stemming directly from that 'peculiar institution' — survive, and continue to wreak havoc relationship and otherwise to this very day.

But surely I digress because this was/is meant to be a poem, and far from a lesson on mine and her story — not his. With fault finding and assumptions aside, and due consideration given to the totality of circumstances (as opposed to only what "I think and feel), a reticent back turned to your face wave is no less (and certainly no more) impolite than say: An' I'm going to be quasi-professional today and greet everyone except you because XYZ. How strange that we often engage in the same behavior we seem to find objectionable in others. Go figure. This experience has definitely taught me a few things: Did you know there was so many ways to spell r...

THEE MOUSEMAN Writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, we give to you a writer who's quickly growing on us. Normally, at his age, growing is hard, but obviously not for him as he continues to teach us through his words. Last week he wrote a promotional advertisement about 'The Game'. And how it wanted you to play so it could screw your whole life up. This week, he drops another thought provoking piece as he explains all the thoughts going through his head as he looks out his window. A window he can't open, seeing things he'll can't reach, and will probably never be able to reach. It's experienced people like this that put things in perspective for the rest of us. People complain all the time, even out here while being free. But Thee Mouseman doesn't stoop to that level. Instead, he teaches. And when he teaches, we shut up and listen. So do us a favor, close your mouths, pay close attention, and learn a little something from someone who's been through a whole lot of things.

The Sacred Window

What do I see when I look at that window? I see an old man staring at me. His hair is getting a little a more grey every year and he does not seem to move as fast as I recall. Now I ain't gonna lie, there was a time when I had a lot of time, it's called youth. Yeah, mines is all gone out the window! I used to sit in the window and watch whatever was going by or whatever happened to pop by. Now I don't have the time to just sit and blaze, I have things to do and not much time left.

Left before I die that is. For me the window represents a chance at opportunity, and that window is closed for a whole lot of stuff in my case. Such as, I will not see another family gathering, a park, a swimming pool, zoo, any kind of party, a super market, gas station, school, graduation of my grand kids, I will not be able to bury my folks, and my wife will live alone. The window tells me I am all alone to a degree.

Yeah, I used to love that window, when I was young, I would look out that window and if I saw something that moved me, I would go check it out. Now, well really all I can see is the other guy looking out the window in the cellblock next to mines, and who Lil' Folks wants to see another bird in a cage that cannot fly?

So the window is like a "look, but do not touch" sign to me!! And that sucks big time.

Do not get me wrong, I still look out that window, but I look at night, and if I am lucky the sky will be bright and clear enough that I might see some stars, but I will turn out the lights, so I do not see that reflection of a young man who is now hella old, staring back at me.

Know what Lil' Folks, if I had it my way I would cement that fricken thing up. Well, sometimes I feel that way, I mean when you get to looking at what you cannot have or get to, it gets hella depressing!! Like all the cool stuff we like we just see on TV year after year, after year, after year, after year. I mean we are not even able to open the window. Want fresh air push your face in the air vent. Want to see something other than dirty stars, turn on the TV and get to wishing.

PS, It ain't as fun as you might think seeing your town on the tube, just make you miss it more. Anyhow that is what the window looks and feels like when you're an old guy on the inside looking out. I have never held a cell phone, played a video game, had a driver's license, been to the movies.

Yeah, the window is a opportunity for me, sometimes I see that opportunity pass my jailbird ass by, year after year. I mean a window needs to be opened if you going to get something from the other side right? Well windows seldom open in prison. Am I lying? Questions?

ROBERT SHINN Getting your heart ripped out of your chest can be painful. Especially when getting your heart ripped out of your chest means heart break. Anyone who's ever loved has probably also lost. So we're sure, as much as we hate to admit it, that most of us can understand where he's coming from. Being incarcerated can add to the stress of being apart from someone you love. We're constantly bringing about good moments we shared with them, torturing ourselves with how good it used to be, and also with ways that we could get them back. But Robert maturely scripts out all the thoughts and feelings in his head and then comes to the conclusion that he's the one that has to put his heart back in his chest. For no one else can do that for him. If you're dealing with matters of the heart, you could learn a thing or two by reading this piece. So please read on and hear the latest from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA.

Back In My Chest

Why did she do me like that
And rip my heart from my chest
Play games with my head
And leave my soul in a mess
I swear I gave her my best
I guess it wasn't enough
She had me twisted in knots
Another lesson on love
I gave her all my dreams
Now I'm stuck with a scar
And going apart at the seams
In my head I hear screams
But they don't come from my mouth
She has me sitting here asking
What is love all about?
And she filled me with doubt
My insecurities knock
One second she's in love
The next second she's not
It's like the fire went out
And I don't have a match
So I sit here and pray
Maybe my love will come back
But it's deeper than that
She took ahold of my life
Like a terrorist killer
And slit my throat with a knife
It's like my soul died twice
And now I'm stuck with a void
I mean damn I'm destroyed man

I was played like a toy
Will I ever feel joy
Will the smiles return
Will I love later in life
After this third degree burn
I guess I'll know it's my turn
When I can trust once again
But for now I'll just chill
And have ladies as friends
I know this isn't the end
Just a moment of rest
A time to deal the scars
And get the pain off my chest
Maybe this is a rest I'll pass
Like 100 percent
Her name is under my skin
Her touch I'll never forget
I wonder where she went
And what she did with her life
Did she marry some dude
And is he treating her right
I try to see from her side
Maybe this love was too deep
Maybe too early in life
And made her want to retreat
I kinda had cold feet
But jumped without any fear
Now my eyes fill with tears
Reviving pain as they fall
Tear stain on my cheek
Her pictures all on my wall
And I wait for a call

And apologies from her lips
Don't be sorry for nothing, angel
There's not need to trip
And I fiend for a kiss
But I know better than that
I'll just be giving her power
And end up feeling like crap
Like an internal slap
Her smile comes to my mind
And I start to return
To all the happier times
Maybe that's just a sign
That I can really move on
I mean she gave me a daughter
And that's the strongest of bonds
I could also be wrong
Things could also get worse
This might be the start
Of the most horrible curse
Wind up in a hearse
On a fateful trip to the grave
Or a horse drawn carriage
On the rainiest day
But I smile today
Because I'm shedding the pain
And I'm erasing the hurt
She left inside of my brain
And I'm returning to sane
And being open with life
Chalk it up as a loss
Before I lay down at night
I cry in my dreams
When I think of her touch
Wake up this next day
To find my way back to life
And she threw me a curve
With a dagger aimed at my heart
She slept with all my friends
I was just a joke from the start
But in not falling apart
Instead I give it my best
Grab on tight to my heart
And put it back in my chest!

In California there is no statue of limitation for prior convictions, and it is common practice for the state to retract decades old misdemeanors and re-characterize them as felonies.

GREG JOHNSON You want to talk about someone who's informed, then let's talk about our beloved Greg Johnson. Every time he picks up his pen we know we're going to read one of those pieces that have your brain hurting after reading it because it's filled with so much information to soak up. In this piece he talks about the Bill HR 4437. It would allow the government to lock up illegal immigrants and anyone who's assisting them while over here. Hell, if this passes, pretty soon the only people that won't be locked up in this country will be millionaires, business owners, and politicians. How fair is that? How many of us deserve so much more? Well, time and time again this writer makes us believe that he's one of the ones that deserve more. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. And we're grateful that he's keeping us informed.

No Bars, No Borders

There is no greater criminal label in American society than to be marked a felon. Felons are stigmatized, profiled and discriminated against.

In many states felons cannot vote, are forbidden from certain licensed careers, prohibited from public housing or other assistance and are generally feared. Feared because when many people think of felons the most heinous of criminal acts come to mind: murder, rape, and child molestation. However, many people fail to realize, as with California's Three Strikes law, that a felon can merely be repeat petty thief, an unrehabilitated drug addict or a man who simply was in the wrong place, the wrong situation, and acted accordingly. In California there is no statue of limitation for prior convictions, and it is common practice for the state to retract decades old misdemeanors and re-characterize them as felonies.

As such, it is no wonder millions of immigrants, human rights advocates and other humanitarians across the country have mobilized on impressive opposition to a bill that would make felons of undocumented immigrants and anyone caught assisting them.

The Bill, H.R. 4437, introduced by Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R, Wisconsin), would make undocumented immigrants vulnerable to Felony Sentencing from 1 to 20 years. It would also make those who employ immigrant babysitters, painters and farm workers, along with good Samaritans who help them criminals.

Apparently not much forethought went into how such an influx of incarceration would affect the prison population. There are currently some 2.1 million prisoners confined in U.S. prisons. The incarceration rate exceeds every modern nation, and has well surpassed any previous domestic prison population.

As it stands, our jails and prisons are overflowing. A series of recent brawls in the Los Angeles County Jail system, where one prisoner died and several others, including Sheriff's deputies, were injured, is indicative of the consequences of reckless and dangerous overcrowding.

Scarce and inadequate resources lead to malicious melees over any and everything: from very limited library seats, to rationed food, to strong armed struggles for decent cells and bedding.

Despite a 1975 United Nations prohibition against double bunking, the U.S. has continued to circumvent Resolution 633 for nearly 30 years; claiming "emergency overcrowding", the loophole permitted as "temporary" measure for such conditions.

A caldron of chaos has subsequently been created by consistently broadening the scope of felonies from offenses once considered misdemeanors.

In California, the overcrowding has led to a crisis in prison medical care so horrific that an average of one inmate was dying per week. In early April, U.S. judge Thelton Henderson intervened by appointing a federal monitor to oversee the prison system's grossly negligent medical

department.

California knows first hand the ills of prison overcrowding. Since the enactment of the Three Strikes Law — deemed the most repressive in the nation — the overburdened prison system had added 43,000 primarily nonviolent prisoners to its vast domain in just under 12 years. To adjust to the influx, Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed constructing two more multi-million dollar prison sites during his state of the state address in January. The two proposed penal institutions would add to the 33 prisons the state currently oversees. Schwarzenegger's proposal comes in perfect timing for the announcement of H.R. 4437.

California's prison system, the largest in the nation, supervises 173,000 adult and juvenile inmates and words, and is responsible for another 115,000 parolees at large.

Around the nation, the fast-paced prison expansion has been a windfall for the business community. By 1999 of least 17 states were in contracts with 20 for-profit private prisons companies that collected more than a quarter of a billion dollar revenues from taxpayers' dollars. The proliferation, like ante-bellum Slavery, is all about the body count. The more bodies, the more profit. Profits are indeed high and very few of the facilities offer work training and education programs that have been shown to reduce recidivism (re-offend).

Meanwhile, Californian taxpayers have seen the annual budget for its prisons increase to \$8.6 billion, from an already obscene \$6 billion the previous years. With close to 300,000 prisoners, the state's prison budget dwarfs the annual budgets of many small countries, including some of our neighboring island nations in the Caribbean. For instance: Antigua and Barbuda have a population of 66,464 and an annual budget of \$141.2 million. The annual budget for Belize is \$142 million, for a population of 249,982 and the annual budget for the Bahamas is \$845 million for a population that exceeds California's prison population at 294,982.

A mere striking comparison is that of Bahrain, a small state in the Persian Gulf that has more than double the population with 634,137 people, yet manages to maintain an annual budget of \$1.9 billion—just a fraction of what it costs to run California's wide web of prisons.

Critics attribute the high cost to inflated prison guard salaries, brought about by one of the most rewarding contracts in their history, while their rate of overtime often leads to repeated overruns.

There are many reasons for the enormous cost of prisons in California and the nation as a whole. The price is already too high to afford H.R. 4437 to label innocent people felons, increase the prisons profit and commit a great moral and humanitarian betrayal by incarcerating millions of people who crossed an imaginary line. People whose presence has been encouraged and incorporated into the economy now face being maliciously turned against and locked up.

The further demonizing of "illegal" immigrants as felons is deplorable and will only succeed in strengthening the prison system.

JOHNNIE MICHAELSWriting from
California State

Prison New Folsom in Represa, CA, is our old friend Johnnie, whom we first met many years ago in SF/YGC. He gives us a brief introduction about how much he thinks our readers need to see, "The Life I Lived." And after reading it, we can understand why. He gives his heart in this poem and it's so evident. First of all, he courageously reveals parts of himself that people are normally too afraid to reveal and as he does so comes to some conclusions that are wise to say the least. Some more jaw dropping ideas like the rest of this section. But let us close this intro by pointing out an amusing irony. In Johnnie's last piece he writes a 'Dear Beauty' letter, but it's more like a 'Dear John' letter. How funny Johnnie? We don't know if you were aware of that when you wrote this, but if you were, it was genius.

Hey Beat Within

This your folks — Johnnie again! Here go a few poems I hope reaches print in your magazine. There's one poem I really need printed. It's called "The Life I Lived". Its real talk, truth, no fiction! If you got a better title for it, please change it, but print word for word cause its gonna have an effect on whoever reads it.

I really support what you guys do for us all, and our youths — keep speaking the truth. I love your editors notes 'cause they speak volumes to all the you know who's.

Too much drama and I feel the clouds over
my head day and night
I lost faith in god,
so instead of a Bible in my hand
It's my knife I hold on to tight

Beauty Part #3

Dear Beauty,

I write this letter to you with my heart on my sleeve as always when it comes to you. It's been awhile since I last wrote you, huh? Well a lot has been going on with me over the past year in here. I been doing my best to survive and stay alive. But not once have I not thought about you even when I'm in the mix of a war. It's visions of you and your lovin' that keeps me motivated to bring home the prize as well as stay thuggin'.

Anyway, how you and the family holding up? Y'all taking care of business? Honestly, how you doing? Do you miss me? Or these four years apart changed your heart? I don't expect things to be the same between us when I touch down. Because that was four years ago, plus we both got older, wiser, and grown up mentally and spiritually over the years.

Beauty, I met someone last year in here through paper and pen who captivated my attention, and her and I have become fast friends. She's young, beautiful, smart, sexy, vivacious, classy with a street twist, and most importantly she's down to earth. Over all, she my true to heart friend, which I pray when I touch down, I can turn a small little something into a big something. It's taking a lot of willpower to keep my emotions in check, so I don't scare or push her away with too much thug passion all at once. I plan to not take her for granted and be right by our friendship — all I can say, beauty, is thank you for everything, you will always have a spot in my heart. But it's best no more between us. This is where we part...

The Life I Lived

So many years I've shed tears of blood
All alone on my own in a world full of lost love
Family and friends gone, left me for dead
Then wonder why I'm so crazy in the head
Having dreams at night of one day I'll be freed
But these police don't wanna see me out of jail
So they keep setting me up, sending my adversaries at
me
Losing my mama has been really hard, I look to God for
help
But I feel so stupid, not getting a response talking to a
wall
I had a wife but she couldn't hang, left a brotha in '05
All alone on my own going crazy, heart filled with pain
I question myself everyday is life really worth livin'
'Cause even when I was out on the streets in 2002
I was scared to have and raise children
Look how I was brought up
No family in the streets of Frisco or Oakland
I got turned out (meaning)
At the age of 8 I was forced to slang crack
Plus be the man of the house
Having to support my lil' sis and fend for us was no easy
task
24/7 as an 8-year old lil' brotha, being forced to wear a
mask
All of my relationships start off good, somehow I push
people away
No one really knows how hard it is to live the life of (Jay)
I love you, you love me, and all that mushy gushy stuff is
cool
But over the past 30 years come October, love is for fools
I just want to live out my last days, drama free with
peace
Keep it real wit' those that have kept it real with me
unconditionally
I got this female friend, we met last year
But I'm sure she too will blow in the wind and disappear
I really like her y'all 'cause she real and good for me
She's not only down to earth, but she a 100% lady ya'
feel me.
Too much drama and I feel the clouds over my head day
and night
I lost faith in god, so instead of a Bible in my hand
It's my knife I hold on to tight
To all the youth please slow down and get focused
Prison life ain't living at all
24/7 stuck in a cell,
Hoping your love one's send you packages - any mail
Take heed to this message, 'cause this real talk truth
Learn to love and respect your mamma
'Cause once she's gone for good the world opens up a
whole new drama

Lastly, I dedicated this to my friend
'Cause she's the one who got me to write again.
I just pray what we got won't stop
And she'll be down for me as Jada was for Tupac!
Thank you for being a friend.

It's taking a lot of willpower to keep
my emotions in check, so I don't
scare or push her away with too
much thug passion all at once.

Mistakes Are Portals Of Discovery

Hello, The Beat Within readers. My name is Tiser Lee Turner, I am typing this letter to encourage people to stay away from gangs, violence as well as the negative forces of the world.

My self, I'm a former gang member currently incarcerated going on close to a decade. At only twenty five years of age, I've experienced so much that that made me want to change my life around for the better and help change other people's lives around for the better and help change other people's lives around that may be in the same predicament, I've worked so hard to crawl up out of.

I must admit it is an on going process; definitely nothing like change happens over night. It takes hard work, determination, re-defining one self and even changing the friends you congregate with no matter how bad you may not want to, in order to get out of the stigma society calls "Street Life". It has been a long time coming, yet a change has finally come.

Before my incarceration I ran with a street organization know to many as the "Original Valley Gangsta Crips", with this collective group, I did such things many consider — put in work in order to gain my stripes, get notarized and gain my respect from my peers as well as the many other groups I once considered my nemesis. I took two bullets for my organization, considering myself being down for homies keeping my oath of loyalty and representing without hesitation, which damn near cost me my life. The partner I was with during the time ran and left me for dead once he found out I passed out from constant loss of blood and shock. He thought I was dead I guess.

After I got out of the hospital from that incident, he came around again, lied to me and said he got shot too so he ran to get help. I knew he lied, but I forgave him any way. I knew he was scared and that was alright by me to be scared. Plus I made the mistake of going into what was considered enemy territory at that time, just because I was on the pursuit of a girl. Once I got well enough, the process of retaliation took place. Homies in the turf respected me for doing things that I did, which made me feel good at the time, but instead of being a leader, I was making the mistake of being a follower.

A few years down the line, the same homie I got shot with, he and I went on a paper chase (capitalizing illegally) pulling licks and many other means of making money, until one night my partner shot the victim of one our escapades, in which we went on the run for a little while, until the law came kicking in our family's doors.

Once the law caught up with my so called "Home Boy", the law caught up with me. While I was going into the jail, my homie was being let out. Through my court proceedings it was mentioned that the person I was with gave me up, so it really isn't no point on trying to fight the case. They offered me a deal with an extensive amount of time without the life on it, so I jumped on it, not really knowing what else to do since I was illiterate to the penal system and was destined to see

TISER LEE TURNER

Writing from the California Men's

Colony State Prison in San Luis Obispo, CA, comes yet another great teacher. One who has been through the gang lifestyle, gotten time over it, and has finally triumphed on the other side. Now, all he has to do is get out and put what's he's learned to use. However, in the meantime he puts it to use by reaching out to our readers (we hope you're reading) and giving them a piece of his life and where it all went sour. With that said, we give to you the wonderful lessons of Tiser Lee Turner... Thanks for everything, man...

the streets again, with the frame of mind that once I get out of prison and I see my so called home boy again, I was going to get my revenge.

After I was sentenced, I called my girl at the time, just to see exactly where her mind was at through all of this. She said she would be devoted and stay down with me through it all. I figured as long as I had her, I had no worries in the world. I had my girl hook up three way calls for me, so I could call to the turf and allow all the homies to know what my crimey had done. My comrades told me it was my mistake for trusting in him the way that I did, and maybe it would wake me up to see that certain homies can't be trusted.

The first year in my sentence, I gathered with my collective group, putting in work inside prison in various ways, gaining my respect on the inside, and constantly getting caught up and in trouble, making the mistake of catching other cases adding more time on to my first sentence. After spending four years in the SHU, I finally started catching on to what life is all about. It hit me like never before. Although it was there the whole time, I just was not ready for it. Everyone I encountered kept showing me in many different ways as to what life was and I did not get it. I caught it now and I will never let it go. Life is about "Self Preservation".

Through out my years of incarceration I have learned to redefine my self and use my mistakes as stepping stones and windows to help other people stop in their tracks and do a lot of thinking upon their very own mistakes. For it is only for the mistakes in our past that we are capable of navigating through the future.

This leads me to the title of this composition "Mistakes are the portals of discovery". Through my mistakes in my past, I have learned to be a leader and not a follower of any kind. I have picked my self up and dusted my self off and started over again. Now aiming for success is my motto. Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward with your life.

Remember that fear always lurks behind knowing what you might be doing is a mistake within itself, yet it may open a door for you to see something you did not see before. Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically make you a happier and more productive person... wake up and open the doors to your mistakes, it will make you a better person today.

RUFUS

We first met Rufus in our workshops in YGC (San Francisco County Juvenile Hall) and now he's in Glen Mills in Concordville, Pennsylvania. In his letter to us he thanks two of our more favorite Beat staff. And it's well deserved, for it's hard to think of two people as dedicated as Mike and Merv. And speaking of dedications, in his two poems, Rufus seems to be speaking of a particular person. But who knows? What we do know is that he speaks the language of the heart. So 'how come' we're trying so hard to keep our brains working to write this intro. We should take a pointer or two from Rufus and start using our hearts.

The One

Between roller coasters and roses
We had a whole lot of fun
Through the good and bad times
I determined you were the one
We experienced typical differences
And ended up shining as bright as the sun
Your past relationships left you behind
But you are my number 1
You are my one and only
Nicknames include my boo and my hon.
I know you're mine
So can I be your number 1

What Up Beat

I'm a former juvenile detainee in unit B4. I'm currently in Glen Mills School. My name is Rufus and I have been writing poems since I have been here and I would really appreciate if you would put my poems in The Beat. My name for The Beat was Rufus. I would really like it if you could send me a Beat magazine. I only have one right now. I would die to have the latest Beat magazine. Thank you very much Mike and Merv.

How Come

It took me a couple of days
To come up with some questions
Here they are
Just pay close attention

How come you don't
Have someone as sweet as can be
Someone to treat you right
Someone like me
How come you don't have a
shoulder right there
A caring one like mine
One that would always be there.
How come you don't
Have someone you miss
Someone to make you smile
Someone to kiss
How come?

TIM T. We love hearing from people we knew back in the day. Or even people that participated in our workshops a while ago. However, we've grown not to like the same pride people take in being smashers, and furthermore, the same pride people ruin their lives with. It becomes kind of exhausting getting pieces like this because if you look at the rest of the BWO section, people are actually taking us seriously, and trying to teach. Rather than using us as a platform to put themselves on a pedestal that only exists in their mind. But even with all that said, we must focus on the positive. And the positive of his submissions is that the way he brings words together is amazing. Hopefully, he'll use his talent to express himself through words to teach next time. He's currently doing time in O.H. Close, a Youth Authority Institution for the youngsters.

I'm growing out of that shhh.
I've done all my smashin'. It's
time to chill, 'lax and get ready
to come home.

Free Speech

What's good with it Beat? What's business like? This is for my young brothas that lock up in the halls. Right now y'all got it good. Especially if you ain't sentenced to come to CYA. But if you are it ain't sweet aunt. But it ain't what you think it is. You can do good time or hard time. All it is, is CYA games.

If you strong minded, you'll make it. If not, you're shhh outta luck. You'll most likely max out. Me, I've been in here for two years. I've been caught up in some b.s. for holdin' it down for the city now I'm growing out of that shhh. I've done all my smashin'. It's time to chill, 'lax and get ready to come home. I'm not trying to see my max 02/08/15. To Whom It May Concern, we'll shine forever. One love, Late.

JACKIE Writing from way down south in Camarillo, CA at Ventura, the only Youth Authority Institution for women, Jackie hits us with a letter to think about and a poem that tells us a lot about what she's been through and what it has made her. A 'soldier' is something people call themselves because it has a nice ring to it. But when Jackie writes about it, we can tell that she rightfully deems herself one. You don't just become courageous and resilient over night. It takes struggle... it takes persistence... but most of all, it takes the willingness to be one as long as you have to be. We hope Jackie isn't a soldier until the day she's dead because living like that can cause a whole lot of stress. We feel like her days as a soldier now can ensure that she'll never have to be one again if she plays her cards right. But hey, we're merely a publication. It's not like we're trying to save lives or anything. Wink, wink... Thank you Jackie. We hope to hear more from you sooner than later. So until next time...

Reality

I'm seventeen and a half in Y.A. Still caught up in the system wishing I can get the hell out and have my freedom. I'm telling you this ain't the place you want to be. I'm from Madera County locked up in Camarillo, Ventura. So far away from home, and all alone. Wakin' up to the same 'o' faces everyday. I'm opening my eyes to see what's ahead of me. I'm turning eighteen years old on October 31st of this year. I don't want to end up in Chowchilla Prison.

For all you out there: it's easy to get in the system but hard to get out. It's just like a gang — it's easy way in, hard way out.

Hard Times

(Chorus)

This is fo' my ninjas strugglin'
Tryna get through life
Slangin' dope stackin' ends
Tryna get by

This is fo' my ninjas livin' the hard knock life
Doin' time behind the walls
Smashin' tryna do they time
(2X)

(Verse 1)

You see I hustle fo' 'uh livin'
Ninja that's all I know

Growing up broke as hell so I had to stack my own
The OG homies used to tell me take myself to school
But slangin' dope and stackin' ends is the life that I chose

Now it's too late no turning back
My cards have been played
Running the streets late night
Ninja tryna get paid
Nickelin' and dimin' grindin'
Startin' off small times

Snatchin' chains off necks robbin' ninjas to get mines

(Chorus) (2X)

(Verse 2)

From poppin' cap guns to bustin'
Cannons on the block hustlin'

Damn I remember before all that shhh started
Grandma used to tell me I'll always be her #1 hearted
Graduated from fifth grade and moved on the block
That's where OG gramps told me

If I'm going to live the life of hard knocks
I gotta live it to the fullest and always stay a couple steps ahead

Keep it stickin' and movin'
And never let a ninja know where I rest my head
Life is like a game of chess
There's no time for mistakes
So turn yo' slips into slides
Or you'll find out the hard way

Soldier

I've been spit on and called a disgrace...
Been taken from my mother's embrace...

I've been told I belong in prison...
Been told I make faulty decisions...
I've given love and in return been used...
Physically and mentally oppressed and abused...
Battered with harsh words...

I trudge along with dignity and sword...
Down the rocky road of contempt and sorrow...
Lookin' forward to no tomorrow...
Takin' in every blow...

Never allowing my weakness to show...
Keeping my head up and lookin' out...
Ridding myself of every single ounce of doubt...
My courage won't let me down...
My strength won't discourage me or lead me prison bound...

Nor will I fall in the face of deceit...
I put forth confidence, my pride, they can't defeat...
They can't destroy the dedication, courage and respect...
All the honesty, honor, and virtue I give to my family to the last spec...

I am my family's warrior, a survivor at heart...
There's no way I could be dragged down or kept apart...
And when this is all done and said
I'll be living in a life of a soldier 'till the day I'm dead...

The Beat

First and foremost I would like to send props to The Beat for putting it down for the lil' homies and younger generation. It's much needed in this twisted world of today. Good looking out.

Also to all the carnalitos y carnalitas tambien that are in this system and doing tiempo, it ain't the life to be livin'. Simon, I understand about that "Vida Loca" and that firme feelin' from getting high. I love that lifestyle y them game tambien. I've been doing this shhh since I was a young vato. Doing Jole's and puttin' in work for the varrio y sabes que I'm a veterano to the game and you know what I got? Nada! I've been in and out of prison for the last 10 years and before that youth programs and camps y todo mas.

Wacha it ain't about changing the person you are, never do that for nadie. But you must contemplate on what it is in life you want. I'm sure each and every one of you would like a firme life with a down jaina y todo. You can have it not by changing who you are but by changing things you do and the way you live. By doing that you can be on the calles drivin' a firme ranfla, bumpin' some rolas and chil chillen with some chicitas bonitas tambien havin' barbeques on the weekends now that is the life I would like to see all of you livin'.

I hate seein' my lil' carnalitos comin' out here wastin' their lives for nada. All of you need to stop hurting yourselves and your familias. Stop livin' in a cell dreamin about a firme life. Get a grip on reality and handle that shhh and education and degree will make you more money than a gun and bullets will ever make you. With that I'm gone. Keep your heads up, stand tall and refuse to fall always.

Con mi amor y respetes.

Waiting For Letters

Sadness overtakes me
As the night slowly creeps
Memories whispered upon the wind
Of my past full of sin
Countless hours slippin' by
A tear falls from my eye
Here alone I sit again
Waiting for letters that nobody sends

LEO

This must be the week of first time writers because we've got a few. Hey, you juvenile hall doubters, we must be doing something right if this publication keeps growing with experienced people trying to teach our youth, rather than bring them down, know what we mean? Well, here's another inspiration to us all. Leo, or Lil' Lazy Eyes, shot us two poems and a letter in his first package from Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah and we haven't put them down since. He's raw in his 'this is what I did, and I'm sure you don't want to do it' attitude. If the youngstas read this and don't learn something, then maybe we need to start publishing pieces by lawyers and judges. We just figured that they would learn more from someone who's been where they've been and even walked further along the path than they did. We have all hidden behind smiles at one point in our lives — sometimes as a defense and others as an offense, but nonetheless there was something beyond the smiles. That's what Leo writes about in his first poem. His second poem is really short, but has a powerful ending as he concludes, "Here alone I sit again, waiting for letters that nobody sends." Well, here goes a Beat. Now the ball is back in your court.

Behind the smiles the tears fall free No one understands what it's like to be me

Behind The Smiles

Behind the smiles is hurt and pain
So much of our lives we give to the game
Behind the smiles lies the wicked within
The evil inside our reason for sin
Behind the smiles the tears fall free
No one understands what it's like to be me
Behind the smiles we hide our frowns
Our lives are turned upside down
Behind the smiles our feelings we hide
Trapped in our hearts and locked up inside
Behind the smiles is a person nobody knows
A lonely soldier letting nothing show
Behind the smiles all is lost
Lost years in life is what it cost
Behind the smiles where nobody to sees
Mixed emotions as we struggle to reach our dreams
Behind the smiles is where a soldier stays
And there he awaits till his dying day.

LORENZO COURSE

Sometimes it's hard to find hope in a place such as jail. But there are certain individuals who have faith and hope seeping out of their pores regardless of the situation. Lorenzo's 'A Better Way' is one of those poems that offer hope. And the idea is not too farfetched because we also believe there has to be a better way for most of us. He writes from San Diego County Jail, and because of him we're holding our heads high today.

A Better Way

Got to be a better way
Different races different places
Freedom rings bells ring
Who can do it better
Putting smiles on different faces
Building my own organization
To face the nation
Feel good putting my people
And people up on it dream hate
Plant it the street drive by suicide
Babies cry homicide
Take a look outside
Walk with me
Side by side
It's updated from jewelry
Finest things
The hate is in the eyes a man leans against
And harmony to the east side, south west wing
We all got sweet dreams one more time
Got to be a better way
Different races
Different places
Better way.

I'm sure each and every one of you would
like a firme life with a down jaina y todo.

You can have it not by changing who you
are but by changing things you do and the
way you live.

Through my mistakes in my past, I have learned to be a leader and not a follower of any kind. I have picked myself up and dusted myself off and started over again. Now aiming for success is my motto.

check out the rest of Tiser Lee Turner's BWO piece on page 57

